

256. I think your prize-taking record stopped about 1923 ?—Yes.

257. Why was that ?—I have not exhibited anything since then. I found that so many people were of opinion that I grew my exhibits in the garden, and I did not like the idea. Of course, it is impossible to grow swedes except in suitable ground. I can honestly say that I have never given any special cultivation to an exhibit. They have been just pulled out of the ordinary crop, and I have never given them more than 2½ cwt. of manure to the acre.

258. How much land, in your opinion, would be opened up by this railway, within a reasonable radius ?—My estimate is 2,000,000 acres—that is, within fifteen miles in every direction.

259. If the railway were formed, it would add 2,000,000 acres to the Auckland Province ?—I consider that if you put a railway into new country, you are adding to the area of the Dominion.

260. In your opinion this 2,000,000 acres could be brought into an equal state of productivity with that of the Waikato country ?—The great bulk of it.

261. *Mr. Lye.*] Have you not had ample opportunity of giving exhaustive evidence on behalf of the project ?—Yes.

262. Every facility has been given you to give evidence and to call witnesses ?—Yes.

263. Have you any complaint to make of want of courtesy, or political bias ? On the other hand, have you not had every fairness shown to you before the Committee ?—Personally I have made no complaint. I want to acknowledge the courtesy shown to me. I think the Chairman was a little hard upon me in not allowing me to reply to points that he himself raised, but I have now had the opportunity of replying to them, and I have no feeling whatever in the matter.

264. You have no suggestion to make of political bias having been shown by the Committee ?—None.

265. I understand that there is a wide variation in the quality of the land in your district ?—Yes.

266. For instance, I understand that some of the best of your land is land which you say if placed in the Waikato would be equal to £20 or £30 an acre ?—When I took up my country it was not equal to the average of pumice land. The Maoris said to me that it was nothing but sand.

267. I am referring to the swampy portion. Although you have a little oasis in the desert, you have not to go very far to get to some of the poorest portions ?—I have broken in a good deal of the lightest of the pumice land with satisfactory results. On the average the pumice country, I am satisfied, will be as good as the average Waikato land.

268. Would it be correct to say that it would cost more and take longer to bring it into a state of productivity ?—The lightest of this land certainly cannot be made as good as the heavier portion of the Waikato land. It would need more manure, no doubt.

269. You estimate that there is some 2,000,000 acres within reasonable distance of the railway ?—Yes.

270. When you cut out the afforestation areas and the Native land, what amount will be available for settlement ?—I do not know why we should cut out the Native land.

271. Well, what is not planted with trees, and what is not Native land ?—I should say that the Native land will be about half the whole area, and what is assigned to forestry will be about 300,000 acres. That will leave 700,000 acres of settlement country besides the Maori-owned land.

272. Are you definitely of opinion that a good road through that district would not hasten settlement ?—Personally I do not want to see a road. It would only mean the speeding up of the driving. The present road is sufficient for settlement purposes.

273. You consider that the railway is absolutely necessary ?—The one thing that is absolutely necessary.

274. You have been recognized as a man who has never swerved from the desire for a railway. How do you account for the fact that you have so little support from others in the matter ?—There will be in Reporoa and the district immediately around it about thirty-three settlers. They are all poor people, and a good many of them are disheartened when the Government is against them. They have not the pluck of a mouse to stand up against that. Take Rotorua: there is a big party there who fear the competition of Taupo. Personally, I think the development of our district would help Rotorua. Another section say that Rotorua is now the railway terminus, and that if the railway goes on they will lose. That is absurd, but there is a great faction of people who believe it.

275. Are you of opinion that the difficulty of finance, in the past, together with the fact that people have not been able to arrange for the purchase of fertilizers, has been the main factor in preventing development ?—No. Those things have been factors, but the main factor has been the want of access. There are many people who have money, and do not need to go to the bank or to the Government.

276. Has the State Advances Department for a number of years practically had the pumice area on the black-list as regards finance ?—I could not say. I have not applied to the Department.

277. Did you hear that that matter was stressed when members visited the district ?—I heard that at Putaruru, but there is no section in that district more than fifteen miles from the railway.

278. How far is Tokoroa from the railway ?—About twelve miles from the Government railway.

FREDERICK GEORGE DALZIELL examined. (No. 10.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are a barrister and solicitor ?—Yes.

2. We understand that you desire to give evidence on behalf of the Taupo Totara Timber Co. ?—Yes. I am Chairman of the Taupo Totara Timber Co., and have been so since 1900. I have with me a map which we have prepared with the view of putting it before the Prime Minister, showing our holdings in the district and those of other companies. There are seven different Government