

75. Have you any idea of the acreage of the good stretches of country?—No; I just know the country through driving through it continuously about once a fortnight; I have never been all over it. I can tell the pieces that are worth while from the road, and there is not a very great deal.

76. Are you of opinion that the Reporoa Estate is the pick of the land?—Yes, on that side.

77. What do you say about Mr. Vaile's property?—I am not very conversant with it, but it is the pick of the whole area from Rotorua to Taupo and right down to Waioru—his and the Waiotapu Valley.

78. With the view of developing this area, are you of opinion that it would be absolutely essential to build the railway first?—I say that if the thing is to be done on the big scale you cannot do without it. The railway does not want to be made a separate thing at all. Any freights carried upon the railway would need to be credited to the development of the land. I mean that the timber freights would need to help in the development of the country.

79. *Mr. Lye.*] Some months ago members of Parliament came to look at the Tokoroa lands, and you took them over the district?—Yes. I was not in the tour when you were there, but I was in one tour.

80. Is it not quite fair and reasonable to assume that the Tokoroa land is of a much better quality than the general average of the Rotorua-Taupo lands?—Yes, that is what I say.

81. Is it fair to state that the land at Tokoroa, and extending out to the cheese-factory, can hardly be described as pure pumice land?—We have no pure pumice land at all.

82. Throughout the land in the Tokoroa district is there not a good admixture that is on clay subsoil?—Clay and pumice together.

83. Speaking of the general average of the pumice land awaiting development, do you consider it would be an exaggeration to say that 50 acres of it would keep a family in comfort when developed?—Fifty acres would not do it unless you were alongside a centre of population. Fifty acres would be too small except in those circumstances.

84. I am talking of the general average of the pumice land awaiting development?—You could not do anything on 50 acres.

85. It would be an exaggeration to state that the general average of the unimproved land in the Rotorua-Taupo area is equal to the general average of the Waikato land before it was broken in?—Not of the same class of country at all.

86. Could you estimate the general average cost of bringing in the Taupo lands: would it be over £20 an acre?—It would be double that. Time is a great factor.

87. If you say it would cost £40 an acre, would you feel confident that, if broken in, that land would yield sufficient revenue to pay the interest?—I think that if you spent that on it you would be near the stage when you would begin to get your money back. It would be much more likely to pay interest on £40, when you have spent that sum, than on £20 when you have that spent.

88. It would be useless to go into the thing without having capital?—Total waste.

89. Tokoroa is separated from the Taupó land by a big ridge?—Yes.

90. And your country would not be served by the proposed railway-line?—No.

91. You have a fair knowledge of the Rotorua-Taupo country?—Yes.

92. Do you know of any areas extending to 20,000 or 30,000 acres without any streams running on them?—I do. You can drive from Rangitaiki to Taupo and not get a drink of water in the twenty-three miles.

93. Can you give any idea as to the possibility of securing adequate supplies of water by boring, taking into consideration the strata of the country, and the deposits of pumice?—I do not know how bores would work. We have had no success with bores on our country, though we spent a lot of money trying to put them down. We got water, but it was insufficient for the needs of a farm.

94. Water is absolutely essential to a scheme of settlement?—For dairy-farming water is the most important thing of the lot.

95. You know Reporoa, and it cannot be compared with the general average of the lands awaiting development?—Reporoa is the best of all that area.

96. There is a certain area of swamp beyond it?—That is so. Wherever there is a swamp the land is much more amenable to cultivation.

97. Do you consider that the general average of the Taupo land would grow crops, more particularly lucerne?—We have no lucerne in our country.

98. You have it just outside, at Lichfield?—No, I do not think it would give anything like a growth. There is not the soil to grow it.

99. Do you consider, as a practical farmer, that this land could be broken up and developed by the average unemployed men who could be used for the purpose of breaking it in?—I am afraid it would be a pretty hopeless job. You would want the men to be under good supervision, and they would need to be exceptional men.

100. Would it pay the Government to consider seriously the subdivision of land in the rich dairying districts before it undertook the settlement of the poor pumice area?—Yes, I still think so.

101. You will agree that the average young settler with limited capital cannot afford to wait for returns?—That is so.

102. Are you of opinion that a scheme of subdivision, the Crown purchasing land in the rich dairying districts, would provide better opportunities for settlement, and successful settlement, of the young men who are landless to-day, than an attempt to develop the Taupo lands?—Yes.

103. In your district, which is more favoured than the general average of the lands, the settlers have considerable difficulty in arranging finance?—It is impossible to get it.

104. Is it not generally recognized by the lending institutions, public and private, that it is a liability instead of an asset?—That is so, and it is.