

162. Will you come to my place and look at paddocks brought in in two years at £7 an acre, and say whether you honestly believe them worth any paddock at Tokoroa?—There is little pumice country that you can put into permanent grass at £7 an acre: that is my experience.

163. I can prove my figures?—It is not a question of figures. The question is whether it will last.

164. You have a Government railway within twelve miles?—Yes.

165. You also receive a subsidy on the carriage of manure?—Only since last November.

166. Who effected it?—I think the Taupo Totara Timber Co. did it. We tried for years to get cheap rates, but could not manage it.

167. You said I had picked my land?—I presume you have, from the locality you are in.

168. You said that in your country the top growth was very light, consisting of tussock and fern, and that light growth is an indication of good land?—I did not say that. I said that with light growth it is cheaper to bring in.

169. My question is whether you consider that light growth is an indication of good land?—It might be better land when you turn it over.

170. You sold some of your company's farms to various settlers, and some of those settlers have sued the company for misrepresentation?—Yes, five or six of them did.

ALFRED HYDE COCKAYNE examined. (No. 15.)

1. *The Chairman*] What is your official position?—I am Assistant Director-General of the Department of Agriculture.

2. You have been in the Department for many years, and you were in charge of the Fields Division for a considerable time?—Yes.

3. Did your work in that capacity bring you into touch with the land in the Rotorua-Taupo district?—Yes. I have been in that district, and over many areas of it during the last twenty years. Quite recently one has become very much interested in these pumice lands, partly due to the fact that it is quite likely that the Department of Agriculture will be vitally concerned in any land-settlement scheme that may be developed by the Government, and in consequence one has given a fair amount of attention to it in quite recent times.

4. Can you tell the Committee anything about the difficult ties of water-supply for the area?—I have partly to go on general statements that have been made from time to time, and with which I agree, with regard to what would be the ultimate destiny of this country if it were brought into close settlement. It appears to me to be fairly definite that the main use to which this land is likely to be put is the production of dairy-produce. That being the case it is, of course, of absolutely first importance to ascertain the watering possibilities of any area of country that is likely to be devoted to dairying. I would view offhand that the question of an adequate water-supply, and the cost of getting it, has an important bearing on the possibility of the economic settlement of this country. One can say offhand that it is moderately well watered so far as the large holdings are concerned, but extremely ill watered as regards small holdings. That brings forward the point that so far as settlement is concerned it is likely to develop more on a dotted style than taking the whole country on a face. The fact that individual areas would probably be widely separated from one another of course makes the position of the pumice country considerably worse than it would be were it adequately watered. We will perhaps get a definite example which appeals to one particularly because it applies to the particular area that is at the present time under discussion—a comparatively small block in the Upper Atiamuri Valley, of from 2,500 to 3,000 acres. Going over it recently, I came to the conclusion that about two-thirds of that area was comparatively easily ploughable, but a great deal of it, even though it were ploughable, would have not to be made use of because it did not seem to me possible that the area could be divided up into say 150- or 200-acre blocks and get water on to each of them. Some of the blocks will have to be of 600 acres or more, on which it would be reasonable to expect people to break in about 200 acres—the other 400 acres probably ploughable, but owing to the water position not sound.

5. Generally, as to the water in the area between Rotorua and Taupo, are there any large areas you know of with water?—I would not like to commit myself at all. I think it is best for me to say that on the whole the land is not well watered so far as small settlement is concerned. It is for proper investigation to decide just what areas are adequately watered.

6. You have not sufficient data yet?—No, but one thinks of it as one of the settlement problems of the pumice country.

7. Can you give us other information as to the soil, and the suitability for settlement?—Perhaps it will be better for me to run briefly through certain phases. I have to apologize because some of the information I may be giving does not exactly relate to the railway otherwise suggested by the 1921 Commission. It is more concerning some of the problems of pumice-land settlement generally.

8. It will have a bearing on the question?—To begin with, we have to realize that this great area of the inland volcanic plateau has been more or less boomed as land admirably suitable for close settlement, for many years. I doubt if any area of what we term waste land has had as great attention paid to it by the newspapers and certain individuals. But the development of settlement has certainly been slow. The effective propaganda has not been sufficient to induce much private enterprise in the development of these lands; but what I view as perhaps of more significance is the fact that the really noble efforts and enterprise of the pioneers of the land have likewise led to no result. One has, of course, to make one notable exception. During the past few years a very large amount of capital has been directed to the pumice country into tree-planting operations. One can say as far as afforestation is concerned that the possibilities of the district are quite attractive to outside