

243. Do you know the rainfall there?—We keep records, which can be furnished.

244. Have you any idea of what the rainfall actually is?—No.

245. At Kaingaroa it is 47 in.: with a rainfall like that do you think there is any necessity for irrigation?—No, there is no necessity for irrigation for the simple reason that the one redeeming point about pumice country is that there is no dry grass there in the summer. Even in the big drought two years ago there was not a blade of dry grass in the pumice area.

246. It looks greener and better than the Waikato?—Yes.

247. If a railway were there the community would naturally follow it: do you consider it would improve the facilities for working the country to have a community use of machinery, so that the settlers could hire the clover-threshing machinery, the chaff-cutting plant, and so on?—Yes, I think it would.

248. Do you consider it would be an advantage if they avoided the system under which each settler owned a separate plant?—Yes.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. Vaile: I went home to Broadlands in the week-end and met several people there who wished me to place their view before the Committee. In particular Mr. Parsons, who feels extremely hurt about the evidence given here regarding his private affairs, has sent me a letter which he has requested me to read to the Committee.

The Chairman: You had better just hand in the letter. We cannot have letters as evidence.

Mr. Samuel: Is this letter bearing on Mr. Parson's evidence?

Mr. Vaile: Yes, on what Mr. Galvin said about him.

The Chairman: It is not a matter to consider as evidence.

Mr. Samuel: Is it a long letter?

Mr. Vaile: No, it is quite short.

Mr. Samuel: There is no harm in hearing it read.

Mr. Lye: Is it comment on other evidence?

Mr. Vaile: It is to rebut certain evidence.

The Chairman: I do not think we can take that.

Mr. Kyle: I think the evidence of the witness we heard the other day certainly brought Mr. Parson's name prominently before us.

The Chairman: He will not be here to be cross-examined.

Mr. Kyle: No, but perhaps the previous evidence has been reported in the newspapers.

Mr. Samuel: There need not be any comment. It is only a matter of putting it on record. It is only to be read, and Mr. Parsons should have the opportunity of putting that evidence forward.

The Chairman: If it is reflecting on the evidence of any one else I do not think it should be given. Mr. Parsons could come here, and we could cross-examine him. I do not see any objection to the letter being handed in for the benefit of the Committee. I would be quite willing that it should be put in solely for the information of the Committee, but it cannot be admitted as evidence. The Committee could take it into consideration when coming to its decision, if it were so handed in.

Mr. Vaile: Mr. Parson's object is this—

The Chairman: We cannot let him state his objection that way.

Mr. Vaile: He is not a rich man, and cannot come down to Wellington to make the statement.

The Chairman: I cannot help that.

Mr. Vaile: He wishes to put himself right.

The Chairman: I cannot help that.

Mr. Vaile: In regard to myself, am I at liberty to give rebuttal evidence in regard to what Mr. Galvin said about me?

The Chairman: You have cross-examined him and have given your own evidence. I can see no objection to your giving a general statement summing up.

Mr. Vaile: And you would not object to my making statements then on the ground that I am producing fresh evidence?

The Chairman: I shall. You cannot bring fresh evidence in summing up.

Mr. Vaile: What opportunity have I?

The Chairman: You have had it. In order to give you every possible chance I am willing, and I think the Committee will agree with me, that you be recalled, if you have any fresh evidence to give. That is fair enough.

Mr. Samuel: That is only fair.

Mr. Makitanara: I do not know about it being only fair.

The Chairman: I wish to be very fair, and give every opportunity to Mr. Vaile. With the approval of the Committee, I am quite willing, if Mr. Vaile has any additional evidence, that he should be recalled.

Mr. Samuel: I think if Mr. Parsons wishes to make a statement in rebuttal of evidence given in his absence he should have an opportunity of doing so. If it is simply a matter of placing it on evidence, there need not be comment; the letter should certainly be put in.

The Chairman: It gives one side only, and there is no opportunity to cross-examine Mr. Parsons on his evidence.

Mr. Samuel: He has no opportunity of cross-examining the witness who referred to his affairs.

The Chairman: There was every opportunity.

Mr. Kyle: He was away when the man gave the evidence.

The Chairman: It may be necessary to defer the matter and consult Mr. Speaker.