

37. Te Whaiti is on this side of the Rangitaiki River, and I think it has been stated that there is a great range between there and Rangitaiki, and that it would not be possible to get the timber across there?—No, I do not know; you could get that evidence from the Government officials.

38. You know that in the North of Auckland they have rafted much of their timber in the smaller streams?—I do not know that.

39. Now, as to the block proposed to be purchased from Dr. Raynor?—In 1910 I urged the Prime Minister that the Government should buy it.

40. Did you suggest a price?—No.

41. You do not know what the price would be: you did not know what that block could have been purchased for at that time?—I do not know.

42. It has not been purchased yet. Is there as much timber in that area as in this Tongariro area?—No. Our estimate of the timber in the Tauri-Tutukau area is 150 million feet, but in these days you could get a good deal more timber out of it than when our estimate was made, so that a fair estimate would be between 150 million and 200 million feet. Captain Ellis, when he was head of the Forestry Department, told me that their estimate did not confirm the estimate of the owner of the land: that evidence is available to you.

43. The Crown has an interest at Tongariro?—The Crown has purchased the Native interest in about a quarter of it. The Crown now steps into the position of the Native owners in respect of that area.

44. Do you know the value of their equity?—They have a title, but it is subject to forfeiture. They have not completed the line, and they cannot now complete it in terms of the lease. I say it is a great pity if the Government does not “play the game” with those people who have spent a great part of their business lives in handling that area.

45. I want to know your opinion of the comparative values of that and Tauri-Tutukau?—The estimate of the Tongariro Co.’s block is 1,600 million feet. The timber is very valuable indeed; it is mainly totara, matai, and rimu. The Tauri-Tutukau timber is mainly rimu.

46. Therefore we will assume that if the Tongariro Co.’s block was worth £10,000, the Tauri-Tutukau timber would be worth £100,000—it would be worth more than ten times the other?—Yes.

47. If the Tauri-Tutukau is worth £100,000, your evidence goes to show that the Tongariro timber would be worth more than ten times that amount?—The quantity would be approaching ten times as much, and the value very much greater than that, because the Tongariro timber is of much greater value than the Tauri-Tutukau timber.

48. What would be the difference in the mileage from there to Putaruru through your line?—It is about fifty-three miles to the Tauri-Tutukau timber block by our line; thirty-five miles from Putaruru to Rotorua; and then it depends upon what route you are going to follow what the distance by the Rotorua-Taupo line to Putaruru will be.

49. But you have to cross the Mamaku Hill?—No, sir—though we have a hill just about equivalent to Mamaku Hill.

50. Do you know anything about the quality of land and about farming?—Only in this sense, that I have had to collect evidence for the 1912 Committee and for the 1921 Royal Commission.

51. Would you support the contention that, assuming this area was planted in *Pinus insignis*, in the course of thirty years the pine-needles falling would create 9 in. of soil?—I do not know anything about that sort of thing.

52. You know that Taranaki is one of the most productive areas in New Zealand, and the bush has been standing there for thousands of years, but there is not 4 in. of soil there?—No; but you can get that information from the Agriculture Department.

53. *Mr. Semple.*] Who appointed that committee that Mr. Cox was on?—That was the Putaruru-Taupo Railway board. The settlers appointed that board. We had no voice in it.

54. The conduct of that board had nothing to do with the proposed Rotorua-Taupo Railway?—No; I introduced that subject merely to show you the report that was made upon our line by the Government departmental committee consisting of the head of the Public Works Department and the head of the Railway Department. They discussed that question, and they reported that our railway was sufficient for all the purposes of that district, and that efforts should be made to make it a permanent line.

55. They gave that report?—Yes, the committee gave that report.

56. Supposing your railway was made a permanent line, would that benefit the farmers on the eastern side?—It would not benefit in any way the Rotorua-Taupo country.

57. Then if the Rotorua-Taupo line was not put through, your line would not give any service to that country whatever?—No, it serves a different district altogether.

58. So that the making of your line into a permanent line would not serve the farmers on the eastern side?—No.

59. You are opposed to the proposed route; you say it is not the correct route?—No.

60. I have followed your evidence closely, and I gathered that your evidence has not been quite hostile, but you are definitely opposed to the proposed route?—May I put it this way: what we have actually done is the best test. Since that railway was suggested I have appeared before Committees on some of Mr. Vaile’s petitions, and said that in my judgment the permanent Government railway to serve the Rotorua-Taupo country should be the Rotorua-Taupo line, but I wanted to see that they did not steal away our traffic from our line.

61. You wanted to protect your own line as against any other proposal: in the interests of your company you do not want anything done that will jeopardize your company’s interests?—This is the position with regard to our attitude: When the line was started it was a surprise to everybody. I