

was asked by the Taupo settlers to get up an agitation against it. The Putaruru paper accused us of masterly inactivity. We have a big interest there. Our manager supported them. We told them we would have nothing to do with any agitation against the Rotorua-Taupo line. We did not regard it as our business, but we urged them to join in the policy which they are now joining in—that is, to get the Government to make up its mind as to what it is going to do with its timber interests, so that we will know where we stand.

62. But you seem to say that the continuation of the advocacy to construct this line was doing a certain amount of damage?—There is no question about that. What I suggest as an alternative is that Mr. Vaile should go with us to the Prime Minister and ask to have the whole problem of the Government's policy in the pumice country settled.

63. I take it that if you can claim that the continuation of the advocacy of this railway is hurtful to the district, then surely one can take it that you are opposed to the project?—I am opposed to it until it has been investigated.

64. Are you opposed to the route suggested by Mr. Holmes?—No.

65. You support that?—I have always said that I believed that Mr. Holmes was right.

66. I understood you to say that you were opposed to it, and that you thought there was some other better route?—I am sorry to have given that impression. I have never tried to dispute Mr. Holmes's route in any way, but you must remember that Mr. Holmes had in mind a line not from Taupo to Rotorua only, but a line from Taupo to Tauranga.

67. Have you any definite scheme yourself? You say you are familiar with the district: have you any settled conviction yourself as to where the line should go?—Well, I think that, as I have already said, a light line should be constructed first to serve the Government plantations and existing settlements. I agree with the Forestry people. I am not an expert, but from my experience of our bushes I think that the Forestry Department is quite right in urging the construction of some railway access to serve those bushes which are now available.

68. What route would serve them best—your line?—No, it is not near our line.

69. Would you suggest, as the line that would serve them best, the one suggested by Mr. Holmes or the one that has been stopped?—They are the same line—there is not much choice—it is a valley.

70. But the line of the route suggested by Mr. Holmes is a different route?—No; it is the same route as the proposed route. The route that this railway is going on is the route suggested by Mr. Holmes.

71. But in his days the route had not been surveyed—it was only a suggestion?—That is so.

72. The line that was being constructed but which has now been stopped—is that exactly what Mr. Holmes suggested?—Yes, sir. It is the same route, but he never located it.

73. But in your evidence in support of the railway-line through the Taupo country you said that you favoured Mr. Holmes's proposal. You said, "My own view, as the result of years of experience, is that the Public Works Department's view is correct: that is the view expressed by Mr. Holmes, late Engineer-in-Chief, in his report to the parliamentary Committee—namely, that the permanent line to serve this district is a line from Tauranga to Taupo via Rotorua and Waiotapu"?—Yes, sir.

74. So, really, according to the evidence you gave on that occasion, you were in favour of the present route, or a route along that valley through that particular country?—I assumed and took it for granted, and still believe, that Mr. Holmes will be found to be right.

75. If you believe that the line as now surveyed is the line that Mr. Holmes suggested should be constructed, instead of your asking Mr. Vaile and others to join with you why do you not join with them?—We are quite willing to join with them.

76. But you are not—that is the trouble. If you are convinced, and you say it here in evidence, that Mr. Holmes's suggested route was based on sound reasons, why are you not figuring in the fight to get the line gone on with?—Because I did not say that.

77. Then I do not understand the English language if you have not said so?—There are two questions. Whether the railway should go through there in a future time no one can tell. That is a different question from the one Mr. Vaile is now pressing upon you, which is, that the line should be constructed now.

78. But the route that Mr. Vaile is pressing upon us is the one that Mr. Holmes suggested?—No, sir. Mr. Holmes said that the line is not a practical proposition at the present time—that was, when he gave his report.

79. Did Mr. Holmes say that this line should be put through in twenty-five years or at any stated time?—He would not venture to say when would be the time: but he said that was not the time for it.

80. When do you think it ought to be put through?—When the Government found it would be necessary.

81. You were not in a hurry for it?—I did not believe then that it would benefit the pumice country. I do not believe that the construction of that line now will tend to the development of the pumice country.

82. But just now when I asked you you said "Yes," and now you say you are opposed to it?—My statements are consistent with one another.

83. I understand that you said you were not opposed to this line?—I have always taken that attitude.

84. Now you say you do not think it would pay: you ought to be opposed to it if you do not think it would pay?—That is not my job. I say, let us have a thorough investigation.

85. But surely you have an opinion to offer?—No, sir, I do not give opinions: I rely upon the facts.

86. Were you then relying upon the facts?—Yes, upon my knowledge of the configuration of the country.