

the farmers about farming. I have had to find out all the difficulties and possibilities of settlement there. That has been my business.

21. But my point is, how is it possible for you to express an opinion about land-settlement when you know nothing about farming?

*The Chairman:* That is his business. When a witness comes here to give evidence, he is entitled to give his evidence as he chooses.

*Witness:* Farming does not consist in merely turning over the soil and putting in the seed. That is not all that is involved in settlement.

22. *Mr. Jenkins.]* Would I be right in assuming that your company, in getting your concession from the Government, took up 200,000 acres, which was to be devoted to settlement?—No, we took up 47,000 acres, but we entered into an agreement with London capitalists, who said they would extend our railway to Taupo if we guaranteed the traffic and if we purchased for them 200,000 acres of Native land. That was our petition to Parliament—to enable that settlement to be gone on with.

23. That 200,000 acres was to be settled?—That is so; those London capitalists were to have it developed.

24. Are there settlers on your line?—There are seventy settlers on our line. Those within five or six miles of Taupo would have been there in any event, but the others, fifty-odd, would not have been there except for our line. Those are included in the seventy.

25. Therefore you are interested in land-settlement?—Yes, we are helping the settlers. The cost of transport for the settlers is very much lower by means of our line than it used to be in the old days.

26. *Mr. Lye.]* Would you consider it an exaggeration for any person to seriously state that 50 acres of average pumice land would keep a family in a high state of comfort, if properly developed?—Well, nobody has tried it yet.

*Mr. Lye:* That is probably the best answer I can get.

EUSTACE LANE examined. (No. 11.)

1. *The Chairman.]* What is your full name, Mr. Lane?—Eustace Lane.

2. Of Rotorua?—No, of Kiwi, Wairoa.

3. *Mr. Vaile.]* This Wairoa where you live is in Hawke's Bay: there are several Wairoas in New Zealand?—It is in northern Hawke's Bay, in the Wairoa County, about six miles from the Township of Wairoa.

4. What has been your previous experience in farming?—Well, I was born on a farm near Stratford-on-Avon, near Broom, and my father was one of the leading English agriculturists. Until I was seventeen years of age I had a good deal to do with farm-life. Then I was in London for three years, obtaining a college education, and then I was apprenticed to a firm of engineers there. I finally got out as "white cargo" to north-western Australia as a shepherd, and I was four and a half years shepherding in north-western Australia. Later on I became a transport agent in Western Australia. I established a firm called Lee-Steere and Co.

5. Will you tell us about your farming experience?—I tired of the desert country in Australia and came to New Zealand, and I have been farming in this country for twenty-five years.

6. Have you had experience breaking in rough country?—Yes, my first experience in New Zealand was when I took up a farm at Argyle, in Hawke's Bay; it was land which nobody else would take—630 acres which was going begging. Nobody wanted that class of land. That section was a very poor one, and I was told that I was a fool to have anything to do with it. I went into it more as a home, but presently I made a hobby of it, and I said I was quite certain I could break in that class of country. Before three years had passed I had fattened two thousand lambs there. In my pocket I have a testimonial from my neighbours, saying that I took up this country in New Zealand that nobody else would have, and converted it into two-sheep country. I stayed there until my family grew in need of schooling, when I went into Napier.

7. How big is your present holding?—2,037 acres.

8. Is quite a portion of it pumice land?—Quite a large portion—all the lowest spurs. The high country is papa, but the lowest spurs are of pumice country.

9. And you have successfully farmed these lower spurs?—Yes, very successfully farmed them. I was told again when I went there that I would "hit the ground."

10. Have you ploughed this farm?—Yes.

11. And grown turnips upon it?—Yes, quite successfully; you cannot grow them in Hawke's Bay except on pumice country. All the ploughable country I have on my land I have ploughed.

12. And you find that pumice soil grows better turnips than the papa soil?—Yes; it never clogs in wet weather. If it is properly fertilized it is the best farming-land in New Zealand.

13. Have you occupied any public position?—I was elected a member of the Land Board. It was my job to classify the land from Cape Turnagain to the East Cape. At that time the Auckland Land Board had not trespassed on the Hawke's Bay Land District, and there was no Gisborne Land District, and my area extended from Cape Turnagain to the East Cape, which I have traversed from end to end.

14. And have you had anything to do with the Farmers' Union?—I was president of the Hawke's Bay Branch of the Farmers' Union.

15. And in Napier have you held any public position?—I represented Hastings on the Napier Harbour Board, and represented Napier South on the River Board for six years.

16. Have you any personal knowledge of the area that would be traversed by this railway?—Yes, I have been through it and across it and round it, and I have carried my swag over it; I have