

done everything but farm it. I came up the Taupo Totara Co.'s line twenty years ago—down to their headquarters—and have walked across it. I walked from there to Wairakei one morning, but I cannot understand the distance as it is shown on this map.

17. You were young in those days?—Yes. And I have been from Waiotapu to Galatea, and from Galatea to Waikaremoana. Last Christmas I was motored by my sons down the Rangitaiki district.

18. Does your knowledge of the country lead you to believe that it would carry a large population when developed?—Yes, I think you will see a very large town grow up at Taupo. Already the Natives are asking £50 an acre for land on the railway that can be quite easily brought into grass.

19. Have you seen Hautu?—Yes, I got my boys in the old "Chev." to motor me to Hautu, and Mr. Banks, the superintendent there, took me in hand, and told me to go as far along the valley as possible and see everything. I was astounded at what has been done on the pumice country there, with the application of only 2 cwt. of fertilizers to the acre. I saw lambs there bigger than their mothers. At the hotel that night I told a man from Gisborne what I had seen that day at Hautu, but he did not believe me. He said we could not do it on the Hawke's Bay flats. But, as I told him, the stock was there. It is an eye-opener, and it is conclusive proof of what I maintain, that in fifteen or twenty years this pumice country can be made into very valuable farms, and the whole of it can be brought in with the proper application of fertilizers. What is wanted is one straight-through railway-line, a continuation of the dead-end short-distance line at Rotorua, to Taupo and Napier. From such a line you could distribute your fertilizers and work your country. As a transport agent I know that this line is absolutely essential for the introduction of fertilizers at the least possible cost. There is not a big margin upon a lot of this country, and unless you reduce your costs as much as possible you cannot handle this country. You must have your fertilizers manufactured, carried, and distributed at the lowest cost.

20. Were those lambs on turnips or on grass?—They were on new grass—temporary pasture; they were on the pumice undulations.

21. Have you any experience as to how long the pasture will hold there?—I have no experience, but I have my own opinion. You have got to fence the country; you must get the fern crushed. Within the last six months I have taken up an area which I found nobody in New Zealand wanted—it is within eight miles of Napier, and it is a blackberry wilderness. I fired it, I put Maoris on it and scythed it, and reburnt it. I dragged Whakatane harrows over it. I top-dressed it and sowed it with grass-seed, and that worthless land, within eight miles of Napier, is to-day carrying four sheep and half a goat to the acre. One of my sons is in charge there, and there are 450 animals now on the land there which was given up as worthless.

22. That was on account of the weeds and not on account of the nature of the soil?—The soil is all right; it is simply a matter of cleaning the country.

23. Have you any personal interest in the pumice country?—My whole interest in coming here is in the development and defence of New Zealand. They may say of me, as they say of you, Mr. Vaile, that we are only going to have a "white elephant" of a railway erected to our memories. But I say that we shall have that railway put right through, and it will be one of the most profitable lines in New Zealand.

24. I quite concur in your view, Mr. Lane, but the question I asked you was whether you have any financial interest in this country to be served by this railway?—Not a fraction.

25. From your knowledge could you suggest the portion of the area which would be most suitable for settlement between Rotorua and Taupo?—Last time, going from Taupo to Rotorua, we met ninety motors. I was worried about whether we would have a collision or not. But I have not examined the country closely. I should say that one-third of that area would be farmable and capable of being used as agricultural land. But I am not going to bind myself down to a statement that I cannot prove. I say that, generally speaking, the whole of that area can be brought into grass. I want to tell you that when I came to Hawke's Bay, twenty-five years ago, a little pamphlet was handed to me, by Mr. Williams, called "Permanent Pastures." In this pamphlet, published seventy-five years ago now, Mr. Williams set out that some South Island gentlemen visited Hawke's Bay, and he took them to a point in Hawke's Bay from which they could overlook what they thought was a wilderness, and they went back to the South Island and said that they did not think much of Hawke's Bay land. The other day the Hon. Mr. Forbes said the same thing about this Taupo country. I say it is possible to bring in this land into pasture which will carry stock, just as it was possible to bring in the Hawke's Bay land seventy-five years ago.

26. You will agree that the appearance of scrub country in its native state is depressing?—Yes, to those who do not understand it—the South Island man, for instance.

27. Have you had any experience of the application of manures to these pumice lands?—It will double the carrying-capacity on such land as my own Kiwi country.

28. What have you noticed as to the effect of cultivation on this pumice soil?—That it clears out the manuka so that it does not come again, but the fern will come again and it must be kept crushed. But there is a new system of cultivation that I would recommend for these pumice areas. My attention was drawn to it by a neighbour, who says that Whakatane harrows should be used on this pumice country. It corresponds in some respects with what the Western Australian farmers are doing on their sand-plain country. They run light machinery over it and put in their wheat at small cost. They have no harvesting-costs, and they can make 9 or 10 bushels to the acre pay.

29. Have you had experience of the treatment of similar land with lupin?—I had an extraordinary experience, but you may say it does not bear upon the matter we are discussing. There was a period in West Australia when lupin suddenly appeared; it grew wild all over the country, and the farmers thought that they were ruined; but to-day the sheep fatten on the lupin-seed, and lupin-seed is worth £5 a sack. I saw lupin growing wild on the road from Napier to Taupo. I am perfectly certain that that country can be handled.