

30. Have you noticed the growth of small fruits, such as strawberries and so on, on that country?—Yes, I was at the “Taharua” homestead, about thirty miles from Taupo, where they fed us on strawberries. They were growing almost wild.

31. Have you noticed anything as to the increase of noxious weeds in this country?—I am sorry to say it is getting almost as bad as the Wairarapa. The gorse is starting on the Rangitaiki River and Plains, and the dog-rose, or brier, and blackberry are spreading, and unless settlement is pushed on there there will be a lot of trouble in the future with these noxious weeds. My opinion is that if this railway had been built fifteen years ago the increased value of the land since then would pay for the whole of the main trunk through to Napier, and that if it is kept back another fifteen years the increased value will have gone into the pockets of the speculators.

32. Have you noticed anything as to the spread of rabbits in that area?—I know the area very well. Portion of it was abandoned by my brother and Mr. James Carswell owing to the State allowing the rabbits to get in. They had worked up the stock on Loch Inver to eight thousand sheep at the Loch Inver Settlement. I say that the country would carry half a sheep to the acre, but to-day it is carrying nothing, through the neglect of the State to develop it. Mr. Kirkham killed thirty-six thousand rabbits there.

33. Are there wild pigs in that country?—Yes, the wild pigs there come out in the open. If it will carry wild pigs it will carry tame pigs.

34. Can you suggest any means of meeting those pests—rabbits and pigs?—Close settlement will do it. One solution is to put the line straight through, and distribute from that by roads.

35. Do you consider that the country from Rotorua to Taupo would be as well settled by road as by a railway?—I say that for farming and for close settlement to suggest developing that country by a road is utterly absurd. You cannot get your stock on a road for the motor traffic.

36. What has been your experience of taking your fat cattle on a motor-road?—I sent three hundred from Kiwi; they were all fat except thirty when they left, but when they got down there were only 137 of them fat—that was at Eskdale. You cannot handle stock on a road with car traffic.

37. Do you find that the butchers appreciate cattle that have been driven for several days?—The butchers will not buy them.

38. You suggested just now that this might be the main railway through to Napier?—Certainly.

39. Do you think it is possible to get a practicable route from there through to Napier?—Absolutely. The route has been surveyed. I have been working from the south end, and I got a tram-line surveyed as far as Puketitiri. It is part of the main trunk system that should be completed.

40. Do you think it is possible to develop the area of which we are talking, from Rotorua to Taupo, without a railway?—Not satisfactorily. You could struggle along, but the best way is to put the railway through.

41. *Mr. Makitanara.*] You are a farmer at Wairoa?—Yes.

42. You know the Wairoa flats?—Yes.

43. You are carried away with enthusiasm for the completion of the Rotorua-Taupo Railway?—Do you think so? Just whatever you think.

44. I am asking you the question—are you or are you not?—That is for you to say. I do not think I am carried away.

45. Do you suggest that the Taupo land can be compared with the land that you are farming now?—Part of it is just as poor only at a different altitude. You come up there and I will show you.

46. I have been through your country; I have been through the Wairoa and know it just as well as you do?—Possibly.

47. Do you suggest that there is any comparison between your land and the Taupo country?—As a whole, absolutely no comparison: my country would carry half a beast to the acre without anything being done to it.

48. Could you do anything with the Taupo land?—No, not in its present state—it would not carry half a sheep to the acre.

49. You think that the timber in the Taupo country could be better served by the Taupo Railway?—By an extension of it; but you have to get it to Taupo first. I am considering the thing as a whole, from a national standpoint; my interest in it is as a whole.

50. Are you aware of the fact that the timber in the Tarawera Block has been bought by Mr. Gardiner?—I do not know anything about it.

51. Are you aware that Mr. Gardiner is now arranging for that timber to be carried on the Napier-Wairoa Railway or the Napier-Gisborne Railway?—He is arranging that, is he? I am not aware of that. I am sure he will never get it out in that direction.

52. Now we come to the Hautu farm: are you aware that the Hautu lands are served at present by forty miles of good road from there to the Main Trunk line?—It was not a good road when I was across there, from Tokaanu to Kakahi; it was a rotten road. You want a good macadamized road from Tokaanu to Kakahi to serve that area.

53. Are you aware that the Hautu land is served by a good road from Tokaanu to the Waimarino Railway-station?—I am glad to hear it. I have only the information from you—I was not aware of it until now. They may have made a good road since I was there. When I went through there it was a bad road. I am not aware whether it has been improved.

54. Are you aware that lambs have been driven over the present road to the railway-station, and taken from there to Westfield in Auckland, where they have realized top prices?—Yes, £1 17s. 4d.

55. You said in your evidence that the butchers will not buy any mutton or beef that has been driven on this road?—I did not say “mutton.” After you have driven sheep a hundred miles there are not many fats in them.