

56. Are you aware of the fact that Mr. Vaile stated that he got top prices at Westfield?—Are not those his products there?

57. But you say that the butchers will not buy meat that has been driven over the road?—That is so.

58. Whereas Mr. Vaile said he topped the prices at Westfield?—I suppose he put them in a lorry and sent them down with a few lambs. We send fat lambs in trucks from Wairoa.

59. *Mr. Jenkins.*] Your experience in farming pumice land was on the border of your property: you said you had pumice on the top portion?—My experience of farming pumice land is gained from a knowledge of what was done on Lock Inver, thirty miles from the railway you are discussing. I have had a wide experience. I am conversant with what has been done at Lock Inver, Runanga, and Taharua Settlements, and on parts of the Mohaka Block, and on my own Kiwi property. I am conversant with the whole thing.

60. Are you aware that stock is transported in Australia and other countries by motor-lorry—fat sheep, by the thousands?—Yes.

61. And economically?—But you cannot insure them.

62. They are insured in other countries?—Perhaps so.

63. You have apparently no faith in the transport of stock by motor?—I have great experience of it but no faith in it.

64. I suggest you have had no experience of it?—Yes, I have, but I will not do it.

65. You cannot have a railway to every farm?—I am not suggesting that.

66. *Mr. Massey.*] We have heard a lot about pumice areas: will you tell me how large an area is available for settlement at the present time in this area which is proposed to be served by this railway?—I cannot tell you; I have not made an estimate.

67. But you have been all through that country?—Yes. It is a large area—it must run into 1,000,000 acres at least. I have been told that the Taupo area covers 3,000,000 acres. Well, I suppose 1,000,000 acres of it is suitable for settlement, that is a rough estimate.

68. What is the cost of bringing this land into a state of productivity?—That again is a matter upon which I would not like to express an opinion. Some men would bring it in, but others would not bring it in. On the Kiwi property the previous owners lost £90,000 when trying to bring that country in. It depends upon the man and his system. I would not dare to give an estimate of the cost. I should think that it would cost from £5 to £10 an acre, but I am not going to bind myself to that.

69. What would be the cost of developing your land?—My land at Kiwi, even on that good coast country, cost £10 an acre to bring it into its present state, over a period of fifty or sixty years. The valuer allows me £3 an acre. I say you cannot do that under £10 an acre.

70. What is the carrying-capacity?—My present stock is five hundred head of cattle and three thousand sheep.

71. What variety of grass have you on your pumice country?—Well, the land varies so, from the poorest pumice to the richest papa, that we sow a mixture of grasses—English rye, clover, timothy, foxtail, and paspalum. I think that McKay, the old manager of Kiwi, told me that there were between twenty and thirty varieties of grass there.

72. You know the Hautu Prison Camp farm: is the land of a similar class in the pumice area?—Looking at it, I should say that the whole of the creeks that come down from Kaimanawa Ranges come down not from rhyolite country but from slate country. That is country where the soil is totally different—slate and limestone. I know that fifty years ago there were forty thousand sheep up there. It is only the neglect of that country that has made this desolation and wilderness. The country at Loch Inver carried eight thousand sheep, and on Runanga there was a certain number of sheep. But there is no attempt at farming; they have allowed the rabbits and the noxious weeds to get in. They say that the country is not fit to farm: the thing is absurd.

73. Are you referring to country on the southern side of the lake?—Yes, on the southern side. It is the land south of the lake to which I am referring.

74. Have you any knowledge of the land nearer Rotorua?—I have only passed over it. I have been from Waiotapu to Galatea, and I have been from Taupo to Rotorua by the old coach-road and by the present road. I had a block for sale at 8s. 6d. an acre; to-day I believe its prospective value is £2 per acre. The Government could have bought that land at 8s. 6d. per acre. It is suggested that this line should wait for another fifteen years; but what would be the price of land there then?

75. Have you any interest in that line?—No, only to serve the country. I have made a hobby of public service since I came to this country.

76. Are you of opinion that a large area of land adjacent to Rotorua could be successfully handled at the present time?—Yes, and converted from a wilderness into useful country. But putting a man on 50 acres is ridiculous; but nearly the whole of it, in my opinion as an experienced farmer with a knowledge of the country generally, can be brought into pasture of a kind. You may have to grow cow-grass, you may have to grow artichokes for pigs, and you may have to make use of other rough grasses. Your experimental farms will tell you what should be used there. Why is not Mr. Banks, the Superintendent of the Hautu Farm, here to give evidence?

77. Can you give us any idea on developing that land?—I would put down the cost at from £5 to £10 an acre, but not having worked it out I cannot bind myself to any statement.

78. You have some idea of the cost of handling live-stock?—Yes.

79. How do you think the cost will compare, by rail and by motor?—I won't use lorries. I have had sufficient experience of them. Whakatu is a much better freezing-centre for us. I have sixteen hundred shares in the Wairoa works, and it would pay me to scrap the lot. The construction of that East Coast line will put 5s. per acre per annum on to the value of my land, and it would increase the value of my produce by £500 a year—and not mine only, but the whole area. They said that the line