

103. There is practically very little offering at the present time?—That is so: they have only yearlings.

104. Is there any native forest in that country?—Away on the other side of the river there is, right down to Galatea.

105. Is there sufficient volume in the river to transport that?—No, not in my opinion. The logs would be rotten before they got to Whakatane, if they tried to float logs down that river. I said their only hope was to connect from Timberlands to join this central railway. It is only a hundred miles to Napier.

106. Would you seriously advance the opinion that it is impossible to transport 80 per cent. of this timber down the Rangitaiki River?—I am certain of it. I have seen them try to float totara down the Mohaka River.

107. You say you would classify that land into three classes: can you give an estimate of the area that would be suitable for dairying?—No, I cannot; I have not sufficient knowledge of it.

108. There is wide difference in the qualities of the land?—I should think so: it varies tremendously.

109. Coming to the climate, do you consider it a fairly hard climate?—In the winter it is a very hard climate, in the summer a beautiful climate. Loch Inver was used by Hawke's Bay men as an insurance against drought. We could send all our stock up by railway and put all our store stock on that country. The only difficulty, and the mistake they made, was that they did not grow winter feed—that is, in the country south of Taupo that the Taupo line would serve.

110. The Taupo lands have a fair average rainfall?—An excellent rainfall.

111. Is it correct to say that the winter there is a rather long one?—Yes, they have to provide winter feed.

112. And it freezes fairly hard there?—I should think so: I know it does at Loch Inver. That is 2,000 ft. up, but the lake is only 1,200 ft.

113. From your knowledge of the country and the bush that is ready for milling at the present time, do you think there is any justification from that point of view for building a railway to Taupo, bearing in mind that there is a prospect of bringing the timber out over the Tongariro line?—I do not know anything about the timber areas there.

114. You know that there have been many failures in the past. Can you give us an idea of the factors that have brought about the failures in dealing with pumice land?—There is the want of cheap fertilizers, the want of experience and knowledge as to how to handle that country, and the difficulty of getting store stock.

115. Has there been much speculation in that district—in the Rotorua-Taupo land?—I should think there has been enough speculation to pay for the railway right through to Napier, and if it is not built there will be that much more.

116. Have you any personal knowledge as to whether there is much cattle-sickness in that country?—I do not know. Mr. McLeod, the late Minister of Lands, told me that the Kaingaroa Plains country was stock-sick, but I was surprised. It is only a matter of supplying the proper ingredients. On the Tongariro River side there is another class of subsoil with limestone, and that is very healthy country.

117. *Mr. Semple.*] I understand you said in your evidence that you have been advocating the construction of this line for eighteen years?—Yes.

118. And you have been convinced for eighteen years that the working of the pumice lands will be a profitable proposition?—That is so. We went so far with it in Hawke's Bay as to get a survey by Mr. McMillan, the Government Engineer, and the surveys and plans are on record in the Hawke's Bay County Council office: that survey was of a route to serve this district from the Napier end. We got on as far as Puketitiri: a tram-line it was called. I did that eighteen years ago.

119. Are you a practical farmer?—I should think so—if any man in New Zealand is.

120. For how many years have you been farming?—All my life: my father's father's father was a farmer.

121. You realize that it is a very serious matter for any citizen, particularly a prominent citizen, to try to persuade the Government to spend a lot of public money on an undertaking, unless he is first convinced that it will turn out profitable for the State: you realize that if a man did that knowing he was doing a wrong thing, he would be put in gaol?—I would hang him like I would hang some others—as I would hang some of the heads of Departments.

122. *The Chairman.*] You spoke about the very successful flats at Argyle—wonderfully successful, you said, they were: where is that?—About six miles beyond Te Aute.

123. Is it similar country to this?—No, totally different country.

124. How far is Kiwi, your home, from the railway?—It will be within two miles when the railway is through: it is about forty-five miles from Motuhora.

125. Then you have been able to make a wonderful success of your place, which is forty-five miles from the existing railway? You do think you have been very successful?—No—I have paid rates, taxes, wages, working-expenses, and interest on my mortgage. In fifteen years I have paid out £45,000. I have had for myself possibly an average of £500 a year—not a wonderful success. I have barely made interest.

126. You have not then done very well?—I have not made a fortune, but only kept my head above water. It has been like life upon a treadmill.

127. You find you must keep the vegetation crushed either by sheep or cattle?—Yes.

128. Does that imply that the land would not be very successful without being very well stocked?—Certainly. If I let my own Kiwi country go it would soon be in a mess.