

129. Can you give the Committee any idea as to what it would cost per annum, once you got your land into profitable working-order, to keep it crushed and keep down the weeds, and keep it in good order? Would it be costly to keep it in good order—more costly than other land?—It would be more costly on the pumice land.

130. You say you have not examined closely the country between Rotorua and Taupo, but you have passed through it?—I have been all over some of the blocks. I have been down the Timber Co.'s line. I have been from Waitapu to Galatea, and down the Rangitaiki to Timberlands, and round the lake from Taupo to Hautu, and across the lake, and from Tokaanu to the Main Trunk line.

131. I am dealing specifically with the lands between Rotorua and Taupo, and I understood you to say that you had not examined that country closely but that you had passed through it: was I right or wrong in understanding that from your evidence?—I have examined it in passing through it.

132. Has it been on such a cursory examination as that that you base your evidence? You would not pretend to have much intimate knowledge of its capabilities by merely passing through it?—Oh, no.

133. Has it been on such a cursory examination as that that you base your evidence?—I have been classifying and examining land all my life.

134. I am asking whether it has been on that cursory examination that you based your evidence?—It has not been a cursory examination. I have gone through it and across it again and again: you would not call that a cursory examination. I said that I have not farmed it, and I would not say whether it would cost £5 or £10 to bring it in.

135. I understand you to say you have not examined it?—Of course I have examined it—I do not go about with my eyes shut.

136. You said 1,000,000 acres of this land is suitable for settlement: how much of this, do you know, is in plantation?—I do not know.

137. Can you tell me where all this valuable country is which was abandoned at a time when prices were very high?—I did not say it was valuable country, but I said that it was country which should be brought in and farmed.

138. You stated the number of sheep that had been on it?—Yes.

139. Can you tell us where that country is?—I did tell you.

140. Will you point it out on the map?—This map [indicated] does not show it. It is thirty miles south, but it could be served by the railway.

141. All this land between the Main Trunk line and Tongariro: it has been given in evidence that there is a wonderfully large area of excellent bush there, and that there is a railway-line in to some of it. Does it suggest itself to you that the greater part of that country would be better served by that railway, seeing that it would be a payable proposition from the start, with all that timber to go over the line?—I have not said that: I said that some parts could be served if an improved road were put in.

142. You think that with an improved road that could be served better?—Yes, the Main Trunk is only forty miles away: it is seventy-six miles from Taupo.

143. Have you actually used any lorries for the transport of stock?—I have sent store lambs down. Buyers have come from Hawke's Bay and taken six hundred sheep, ewes and lambs, and lorried them down to Hawke's Bay: they cost 2s. 6d. a head. But I have never sent fat stock down that way.

144. You stated that you stood to get a good increased value on to your land if that railway were constructed?—It is being constructed. I am talking about the East Coast line. The Rotorua-Taupo line will not benefit us at all, except that we will have access that way to the Waikato and Auckland markets.

145. It would benefit you, then?—Indirectly—and considerably.

146. Have you any idea as to how much?—I could not say, but I could sell my wethers to Waikato buyers, and they would go straight through, instead of coming down to Palmerston by train.

147. Do you know any other large areas of land, fairly barren land, where there is a railway, and yet the land has not developed in consequence of that railway?—I saw some land in the Wairarapa at Annandale. I was astonished at the mess the country is in there, with scrub and gorse getting hold of it. I was going to tell Mr. McLeod about it. I think it is a disgrace to the locality.

148. How far is that from the railway?—I think it would be about twenty-five miles from there to the line.

149. Do you know of any other large areas: is there any pumice land close to the Main Trunk Railway that you know of?—I should think so.

150. And yet the Main Trunk line has not developed it?—Has it not?

151. It is not developed?—Is it not? I should think it has been of tremendous assistance. I do not know.

152. If it is a fact that a large area of pumice land lies close to the Main Trunk line and is not developed in consequence of the Main Trunk line, do you still think that the mere fact of a railway being put into this pumice country between Rotorua and Taupo would develop it?—I should think it has been held up by speculators. You want to get a steeper graduated tax on to it.

153. You do not think that the railway would do away with the speculator?—Yes, it would, if the State takes the land at its present value.

154. You think, then, it would be conditional upon the State taking the land?—I would resume miles of it.

155. Do you think it would be developed by private enterprise?—Yes, I think so. You cannot go on loading land with speculative values.

156. Do you know Central Otago? There is a large area of land there as poor as this, and a railway-line has been put right through it?—It should not have been put through.