

157. Whether it should or should not have been put through it, it is there, and the land has not been developed in consequence of that railway. That is a further example. I want to ask you whether the mere fact of the railway being there, in view of all the circumstances, would develop this pumice land on the Rotorua-Taupo area?—I must know the conditions down there, of which I am perfectly ignorant.

158. You spoke about agitating for a line eighteen years ago, a light line of railway which had been surveyed. You were instrumental in bringing about that survey. You thought that would be a suitable railway to build?—I think it was a good start.

159. Do you think that that class of line would develop the land?—I do not think so, but it was all we could get at that time. There is one point I want to make—part of my evidence which I neglected to give: it has a very important bearing upon this railway from Rotorua to Taupo. I want to draw the attention of the Committee to the fact that railway access to Taupo would constitute Taupo the finest defence centre in New Zealand. Without railway access you cannot mobilize on a defence centre. General Sir Andrew Russell agrees with me on this point. He has been assisting me at the Napier end in the direction of getting this line put through. I am sorry he is not here to give evidence. He agrees that Taupo is the finest defence centre in the Dominion for mobilization for aeroplane defence, but that is not possible without railway access.

160. *Mr. Makitanara.*] Do you suggest that in time to come there will be a foreign army attacking us in New Zealand here?—Well, do you think the German nation is going to pay reparations extending over sixty years? Of course the danger to New Zealand at the present time from a defence point of view is absolutely imminent. You are at peace to-day, but in a month you may be at war.

161. Why should you mobilize in there? Do you suggest that a foreign army is going to come here?—I think that the Maori element would make some of the finest fighters we could have.

162. *Mr. Kyle.*] Why do you think that Taupo with a railway is the best point for defence in New Zealand? We have a Chairman who was a Defence officer—it is not to curry favour with him, I hope?—I had the honour of accompanying Lord Roberts into Pretoria as special correspondent for the *Melbourne Herald*. I hold a distinction, the war-medal conferred by the Imperial Government for my services with the army in South Africa. I have some knowledge of military actions and tactics, and I say that Taupo for this reason would be a great mobilization base. You have a Main Trunk line and a suggested improved road to Tokaanu. You have a situation on this side with easy construction from Taupo down to the Rangitaiki River to Whakatane. I suggest that this line should be considered not as a short-distance railway but as a Main Trunk line through to Napier. You could concentrate from the Bay of Plenty, from the Main Trunk on the west coast, from the east coast, and from Auckland, with the greatest ease and mobility on your Taupo centre, which is sheltered from attacking forces. This line that is proposed to be built is the only one almost in New Zealand that you cannot bomb from aeroplanes.

163. It would be our last line of defence?—The last line of defence, as it was with Te Kooti.

164. You consider yourself a pioneer?—I should think so. I have ten testimonials here extending over forty years. No one can put such testimonials on this table as I can.

165. You are satisfied that with a railway into this area men of your standing could do well there?—I am done—my heart has given out; but I have five sons, and one of them already is on 2,000 acres of bush at Ruakituri, and without assistance he is bringing in that country. I have two more at home, and one on a blackberry block at Petane.

166. This land would lend itself to group settlement, would it not?—That I am not prepared to give an opinion upon. I cannot handle it myself, but I have four sons who could.

167. *Mr. Vaile.*] You were asked as to the effect of driving bullocks: you do not mean to infer that bullocks are worthless afterwards, but that it depreciates their value?—Certainly it does.

168. With regard to the bullocks I sold at Westfield after driving them three days and trucking them one day: am I right in suggesting that to top the market with them they must have been extra prime when they left my country?—Yes.

169. You were asked about the Kaingaroa plantations: do you know the Government plantations there?—Yes, I have passed them, but I have never examined them.

170. What are the ages of those trees?—I do not know.

171. Are they saplings, or ten or twenty years old?—I should say some of them are twenty-five years old.

172. There is a good deal of fairly mature timber there, then?—Yes.

173. In regard to the climatic conditions of the district, you said in your evidence about Loch Inver that it was 2,000 ft. up: you were not then speaking of the country between Rotorua and Taupo?—No.

174. About second growth on pumice land in the area of which we are speaking: have you ever seen second growth on ploughed land there?—Well, I have not sufficient knowledge. No, I have not seen it there. I have not ploughed it, but in my pumice country if you plough it you do not get manuka second growth.

175. In the area there I have never seen second growth on ploughed pumice land. Now, I want to ask you a question to clear up the evidence given before: What is the distance from Wairoa to Waiotapu?—I could not tell you, but it is forty miles from Wairoa to Waikaremoana.