

and that land comprises Crown lands, 41,000 acres; State forest, 56,600 acres; private land, 100,000 acres; Native land, 110,480 acres. In the Taupo County there are affected by the railway—Crown lands, 299,000 acres; State forest, 189,400 acres; private lands, 316,000 acres; Native lands, 307,520 acres: or a total of 1,111,920 acres. The totals for both counties amount to—Crown lands, 340,000 acres; State forest, 246,000 acres; private lands, 422,000 acres; Native lands, 418,000 acres: making a grand total of 1,426,000 acres—that is, all lands of all qualities and all “starts.” I know that many people who have expressed opinions on the Taupo land have never seen it other than from the road, and these same people, in my opinion, have no idea of the magnitude of a million acres. You go along the Taupo road and you see what appears to be an unlimited expanse of easy country, but you must remember that all the country is very broken, comprising the whole of the Paeroa Range, a series of hills right through to Taupo, all very broken country. On the east you have country rising to from 1,650 ft. to 2,500 ft. This run [indicated], Run 60, is about 2,450 ft. up. It comes right over to Taupo. It would be about eight or nine miles from the railway-line, and it rises very sharply. But the important feature about all that country is that there is practically no water upon it. I have endeavoured to locate water there for several years, but so far I have never found one spring. I have camped in that country, and if there is water there I should have found it. I am not going to say that water cannot be obtained there by artesian boring, but I am very doubtful as to whether boring would be successful, on account of the formation of the country. Of course, I cannot express a definite opinion upon that. None of this country south from Reporoa has the qualification of having swamp land, which is so essential, as you find it at Reporoa. I may say that I do not think at present there is more than about 100,000 acres of land along that valley of the Taupo country which could be entertained from a farming point of view at the present time—that is, all status of lands. Of course, you cannot split hairs in regard to a thousand acres. The best of the land, in my opinion, lies in the Rotomahana-Parakeranga area, south of which are the Guthrie Homestead settlers. I might explain that on this map the yellow indicates Native land; the green, alienated land or freehold; the blue is education land; the brown national-endowment land; and the red State forest. We are quite sure that a lot of this country has very good chances of successful development, provided a man could have 200 or 300 acres so as to be able to cope with the ragwort, which is coming there; but before putting sheep on it I think it would be necessary to have an assurance from Agriculture Department experts that lambs can be raised profitably there. In regard to bringing in the country, it is admittedly slow to bring in, and I think that as regards the best of the Taupo country south of Reporoa, a man taking up land there would be developing it for his son. We know that fertilizers are of great value in that country, and will be of much use in bringing it in, but the most important thing next to that is the consolidation by stock, and that is a very slow process. We have heard figures given for the cost of bringing in that country, but really I do not think you could measure the cost in pounds shillings and pence. We know that one man in 1907 bought 53,000 acres, for which he paid £3,912; in 1913 he sold 13,102 acres for £6,551; in 1925 he sold 25,185 acres for £25,185; and the same year he sold 4,887 acres for £7,330 10s. Originally he bought 53,250 acres for £3,912, or 1s. 6d. an acre.

6. *The Chairman.*] Whose land are you referring to now?—Mr. Vaile's. He originally bought 53,250 acres, of which he has sold 43,000 acres for £39,000. And this gentleman still holds 10,000 acres, of which he has improved only 1,700 acres, and which I understand he values at £3 10s. an acre. The point is that if a man with Mr. Vaile's experience can achieve so little, and bring in such a small proportion of that land in so long a time, with the capital at his disposal, I do not think there is a very bright outlook for individual settlers going in there. What I want to emphasize is the danger of putting settlers in there, assuring them of success which they can never realize. I want to say that on the deteriorated lands there is no greater tragedy than for settlers to go on lands there and to find at the end of twenty years that their country is just where it was when they started, and they are broken men. As far as I am concerned, I have no personal feeling or interest to serve, but I know this country so well that I think it is a very grave matter indeed to delude people into the belief that on this country they will find an agricultural Eldorado when in my opinion it is fatal to put individual settlers in there to-day. I do not wish to say any more, but I will be glad to answer any questions that may be put to me.

7. *Mr. Kyle.*] How many years have you been in the Department as a Field Inspector?—Ten years.

8. What were you when you joined the Department?—Well, my father was a navvy on the Main Trunk line, getting 7s. a day, and he took up a block of land under the Palmerston Knights of Labour; it was in the Rangitikei district, and that was in 1896 or 1897. For fifteen or sixteen years I saw what it took to bring that country in, and he was dealing with good country, which has never gone back, and he has had his reward for his hard work. I went right through the country from the Rangitikei to the Taumarunui country, and then the war broke out and of course I went, and when I returned I entered the service of the Lands Department and was stationed in Taranaki, and had to deal with all the deteriorated land in North Taranaki. I do not think that any man has seen more of the deteriorated lands than I have.

9. Were you a practical farmer at the time, or what was your occupation when you joined the Department—a farmer, a soldier, a parson, or what?—When I left home I worked on a farm.

10. How would you describe yourself?—When I went to the war I was an Authorized Assistant Surveyor.

11. You spoke of the cold winds that that valley is continually subject to?—Yes.

12. Do you know the Wairarapa Valley?—I have been in the Wairarapa, but it does not compare with Taupo in that respect. The climate of Taupo is far more severe than that of any other part of the North Island that I know.