

38. Is it possible for the whole of your reports to be laid before this Committee?—I think so. I would be only too pleased if they were: as far as I am concerned you are welcome to my reports.

*Mr. Kyle:* That can be done, Mr. Chairman.

*The Chairman:* We will have to consider that at a meeting of the Committee.

39. *Mr. Semple.*] You referred to certain lands on which work had been done, and you said that it was “window-dressing”?—No, sir, not on the settlement lands.

40. That was on Mr. Vaile’s land. You would not charge all the men who have gone there on that pumice land as being “window-dressers”?—No, sir.

41. What evidence have you for saying that in Mr. Vaile’s case it was a case of “window-dressing”—that is a pretty serious thing to say about a pioneer settler?—The inference is drawn from the sales of land effected, and the purpose for which the land has been sold.

42. It is twenty years since he went into that pumice country. He bought his land there and had managers upon it, but he found that he could not get the land brought in successfully under managers, so he himself went there. Do you mean to say that he had at the back of his mind the motive which you suggest? He gave up a good business in Auckland and went into the wilderness, as it were, isolated from civilization. Do you mean to tell me that he went there with no other motive in his mind but “window-dressing” on Native land, with no vegetation?—I have no idea of what was at the back of Mr. Vaile’s mind, but we all know that he has never lost an opportunity to portray to the public the great possibilities of this country.

43. Well, he could be quite honest in his agitation, could he not?—Far be it from me to say that Mr. Vaile is dishonest.

44. What right have you as a departmental officer to come here and accuse a pioneer of “window-dressing”?—I was asked to express my opinion on the work done there, and if 1,700 acres brought in was all the work that was done, with the capital available, I can say it is only “window-dressing.” I say that salesmanship entails “window-dressing,” and there is nothing dishonest about salesmanship.

45. But it would be dishonest of any pioneer to try to persuade the Government to spend £700,000 upon the basis of “window-dressing”—that would be a crime, would it not?—Well, everybody has a different way of looking at things.

*Mr. Semple:* I admit I am puzzled at your outlook.

*The Chairman:* The witness must take his own way of giving his evidence, Mr. Semple.

46. *Mr. Semple.*] How do you know that there is a lot of Mr. Vaile’s land unfit for settlement?—I know that when you have land “standing up on end” you cannot farm it.

47. Did you ever farm land yourself?—I farmed with my father on good country.

48. Then you have no knowledge of how to deal with bad country?—I have seen what can be done in the King-country. I have seen all kinds of experiments tried there.

49. Have you any knowledge of the Waihi Plains prior to settlement?—I know the formation of the country there.

50. You did not know anything about them before they were settled by farmers there?—No, but they are a different formation to the Taupo country.

51. It may be news to you that we have witnesses who have said that the Waihi Plains land is inferior to the Taupo country—and I know that country myself, too?—Well, if you take away the Reporoa land, which is the best of the Taupo country, you can not find poorer country than some of the other Taupo country.

52. You do not know anything about the Waihi Plains, or the condition of the land there before settlement?—I know a lot of the unimproved land there now, and I would infinitely rather take up the Waihi Plains land than land in the Taupo district, if water were obtainable there (in the Waihi Plains).

53. Do you know Mr. Parsons there?—Yes.

54. Would you say that his work has been in the nature of “window-dressing”?—No, I regard him as a real pioneer. He took up 12,000 acres fifteen years ago. But is it a fair thing to go into a man’s financial position?

55. I do not ask you to expose his cheque-book, but I want to know what you know about Mr. Parsons as a farmer—I do not want to pry into the secrets of his exchequer?—But it is the financial position of a man that discloses whether he is a successful farmer or not.

56. How has he got on?—But for the money he earned by rabbiting he would not be there to-day.

57. You know that Mr. Parsons started just at the outbreak of the war and that the war period almost strangled him?—Yes.

58. And still he has the greatest confidence in the pumice country?—Yes.

59. Do you regard Mr. Parsons as a very honest man?—I want you to remember that the best of the pumice land is near where the swamp land is. The formation on different parts of the pumice land varies very much.

60. You regard Mr. Parsons as a very honest man?—Yes.

61. Do you know Mr. Butcher?—No.

62. You said that the State ought to carry the liability for putting that land into cultivation?—Yes, I think so.

63. You think that group settlement applied to that pumice land would be a good principle to adopt, putting the land in order before settlement?—You have mentioned that it would be a crime to spend £700,000 there, but I think that the wasting of many lives there; I think that for people to be put on to land there where they cannot succeed is a far more serious thing than the expenditure of £700,000.

64. I want to ascertain whether you have any idea as to how that land should be settled. Some of us are of the opinion that a group-settlement scheme would be highly desirable—that is to say, that