

224. What is the value of his improvements?—I could not say offhand. It is a question of the value they are to him.

225. Would they amount to the value of his mortgage?—Not as they stand to-day. If he does not concentrate on top-dressing his country, in two or three years his improvements would be worth nil. The country has not reached the stage at which it will hold. If he walked off now, it would be worth nothing in two years.

226. *Mr. Vaile.*] You have said that both in quality and in quantity this land has been greatly exaggerated?—Yes.

227. You tell us there is a million-odd acres within reach of the railway?—Within twenty miles of the railway.

228. Have you taken into account the land that borders on Lake Taupo?—I have taken the country as you see it on the map.

229. I ask again if you have taken any account of the land bordering on the lake?—No.

230. Do you not think that with a railway to Taupo that land would be served by the railway?—There is not enough land there to warrant it. The best outlet for that country is through Mokai.

231. The Mokai Railway is not there; but suppose the Government railway is to Taupo: will that land be served by it?—I do not know. I do not see why it should be served there at all.

232. It seems to me that the present farming-land on the shore of the lake might easily get to Taupo and use the railway, but if you say it cannot, that is your evidence. I say it could?—All right.

233. You said a great deal of the land there was one in one. Can you tell us where that land is?—On the western side of the railway—right through the Waiotapu—right through to Mokai.

234. What is the area of the Paeroa Ranges?—It depends upon what you call the Paeroa Ranges. They extend a long way. The ranges terminate in a series of hills. They start from the Maungaongaonga, and right through to Orakei Korako, and through Tahorakuri and Te Hukui.

235. Do you know the area of the Paeroa bush?—I am not quite sure of the area, but I have heard something about the figures. I know what the quantity is.

236. Never mind about the timber: we are talking about the area of country?—It is hard to determine.

237. Do you know the area of the bush?—It might be 2,000 or 3,000 acres altogether.

238. Is there any precipitous land outside the bush?—Yes, over the Waiteti Valley, up the Te Waro Stream.

239. Have you been on the Tahora Block?—Yes.

240. Do you mean to say it is not 90 per cent. ploughable?—I do.

241. Have you ever been through the Paeroa bush?—I came through it when I was making my last inspection, and came right over the range to Whirinaki, and dropped into Reporoa.

242. How much of the actual Paeroa bush is one in one?—On the far side, the western side of the Paeroa Range, it extends miles along.

243. You are an officer of the Lands and Survey Department: will you say what surveyed area consists in an abrupt precipice?—When you are making a visual estimate like that you cannot be very definite. As far as the Paeroa Range is concerned, there is about six miles of really steep country.

244. What is the measurement of the wall behind you?—One in one.

245. You will acknowledge that in a very precipitous piece of country the measurement has very little relation to survey measurement?—Yes. In an angle of 30 degrees you will reduce your chainage to about one in ten, or something like that.

246. So that a piece of broken country does not cover the area that the appearance of it suggests?—When it is broken up by hills you would speak of it as steep country. There is a lot of steep country that is unploughable.

247. Have you seen them plough land at Putaruru?—Yes.

248. Is it not far steeper than any country in that area?—Oh, no.

249. Are you aware that the settlers are going off the original swamp to which you have referred to the pumice?—Some of them are, but they are not grazing their stock on the pumice.

250. You gave some evidence about the return per cow: 170 lb., I think you said?—171 lb.

251. I have here a cutting from the *Dairy Farmer* showing the group average of Reporoa as 215.70 lb. of butterfat. What do you say about that?—I say that it is absolutely wrong. These estimates are taken in a very haphazard way. You do not know how many cows were taken for them. The cows at Reporoa are not averaging 215 lb.

252. Do you say that the list is a fake?—No.

253. Do you think the New Zealand Co-operative Dairy Co. would put in a false statement of the returns?—I do not say that.

254. If I tell you that they have instanced four herds at Reporoa—one of eighty cows averaging 237 lb. of butterfat, another of sixty cows averaging 233 lb., another of thirty-five averaging 243 lb., and another of 130 averaging 223 lb.—do you think they would deliberately misstate those figures?—If you will name the settlers who have given the returns I will tell you.

255. I am not giving the names?—I will tell you who they are. One of the settlers giving these returns is Mr. Hickey, who occupies the homestead section and keeps the Waiotapu Hotel. He has several blocks of country on the richest portion of Reporoa, and also some rich swamp country. One section has been used as a horse-paddock for years, and was therefore thoroughly consolidated. I attach no importance to one or two isolated returns.

256. In addition to Reporoa, I have the returns of four other settlers: do you question those?—If the New Zealand Co-operative Dairy Co. give returns I do not question them. It is a question of