

6. It is all clear?—Yes.
7. Down in grass, or what?—Down in grass.
8. Does it adjoin the railway-line?—Yes.
9. Have you been troubled with fires on that farm?—Yes.
10. Lately?—Yes.
11. From the end of December have there been many fires?—There have been seventeen or eighteen. In addition, my neighbours have put out fires on the farm that I knew nothing about.
12. Where did the fires occur?—Alongside the railway. Some of them are as far in as a chain and a half from the centre of the railway.
13. That is speaking as to this year. In former years, say for the last five or six years, have you been troubled with fires?—Yes.
14. In the same locality?—Yes. There was not so much damage done on the farm as there was on one nearer Auckland.
15. It is alongside the railway, too?—Yes. A great quantity of oats in stook were burnt. I put in a claim, and the Government paid so-much, and I was advised by Mr. Brookfield, senior, to accept it rather than go to law.
16. Is it at any particular time in the day that fires have occurred this year?—It has either been by the Rotorua train passing at twenty minutes to 9 in the morning and at twenty minutes past 4 in the afternoon, or by the Waikato train passing at a quarter past 10 in the morning and at a quarter to 2 in the afternoon. Those are the two trains that are the greatest transgressors. We have been obliged to keep a strict watch when those trains pass.
17. Either you or some members of your family are always on the watch?—The women folk are always on the watch when those trains are passing.
18. And except just after the passing of trains have you had fires?—Occasionally the goods-trains have caused fires. The last fire was caused by the Mercer train passing Papatoitoi after 5 o'clock. It set fire to two places, and two of my girls ran with buckets and put the flames out. I happened to be on the train that day, and just as the train was going out of sight over the hill some one happened to say "Hullo, there's another fire."
19. There is a hollow about that part?—Yes, a valley. It is like a funnel, and it carries the sparks a long distance.
20. *Mr. Poynton.*] Do you allege much damage by recent fires?—Yes.
21. *Mr. Brookfield.*] Now, as to the fire three or four years ago, into which inquiry is being made by the Commissioner, were you present when it occurred?—One of my neighbours told me the oat-field was on fire.
22. How many acres of oats were there?—About 3 or 4 acres were burnt.
23. What was the date?—I cannot say, but it will be shown in some of my books.
24. *Mr. Poynton.*] Will you keep to the claim that came before Parliament: I cannot inquire into any other case?—Very well, sir.
25. *Mr. Brookfield.*] Where is this grass paddock, then, that was burnt two years ago—on the 13th January, 1898?—It is not on the homestead farm. It is a quarter of a mile on the Auckland side of the Papatoitoi Station.
26. What was in the paddock at the time?—Grass.
27. What damage was done?—It had to be resown. It was not ploughed, but it got bonedust along with the seed to encourage it.
28. Would that have been necessary if no fire had occurred?—No.
29. Would it have been done?—No.
30. Would that fire do any damage to the grazing for any time?—Yes.
31. What loss of grazing would there be?—It was a good many months before it was fit for grazing again.
32. And you lost the use of it, for how long?—About four months.
33. What do you estimate the damage at?—Mr. Cooper says I put in a claim for £20, but I would not like to do the work for that money.
34. Do you know how that fire occurred?—It was caused by railway-sparks.
35. How do you know?—A train went past and the fire followed.
36. You know that yourself?—Yes. I have sometimes been standing on the platform of a carriage, and it was dangerous to do so with the sparks.
37. Where did this fire start?—About 10 yards inside the railway fence. I may say that the platelayers take precautions and burn between the railway fence and the rails.
38. It occurred in this case about 10 yards inside the fence near the railway-line?—Yes.
39. Had any train passed about that time?—Yes, the 10 o'clock train—the Te Aroha train.
40. Was it only the grass that was damaged?—It ran through the wire fence and got into another paddock, but not much damage was done, as it was put out with water and wet branches.
41. Did you help to put it out?—Yes.
42. And members of your family?—No. There were three of my neighbours and one of my men.
43. Was there anybody about who could have set fire to it?—No; I have a witness to state that there was no one about.
44. Could the fire have occurred through a match being thrown from the train?—No.
45. Why?—There is no such thing as throwing a lighted match a chain from the railway-line.
46. Was the stuff burning between the railway-line and your fence?—No; the men had been burning along the line. The fires only occur when there is a high wind. The sparks are carried along by it.
47. Speaking generally of fires caused by engines, you told us in the first part of your evidence about a number of fires that have occurred: do you say that they have invariably occurred when