

and another at Taihape. Further on there is one at Raetihi, and another, I believe, at Ohakune, besides one on the Pipiriki Road, at McLaren's. In the southern part of the district the chief timbers cut are totara, matai, and rimu. About Utiku and Taihape rimu, matai, and totara are also utilised, the mills being chiefly employed in supplying local requirements. This last remark applies also to the mills further north.

7. *Mr. Field.*] There is at present no means of getting it out from the mills further north?—It is too far back to profitably send timber down the country.

8. So they have to rely on local wants for the present?—Yes. The timber on the Awarua blocks is chiefly of the variety already stated—rimu, matai, totara, and kahikatea, with some hinau. The last mentioned, I may mention in passing, is a dark-hearted timber, and, being strong and durable, is very suitable for fencing-posts. There is also some scattered totara in the Rangiwaea Block. The Land Board has already set aside in this block 2,000 acres as a forest reserve, as the bush is of such a heavy and superior quality. The alienated lands in that block provide another 4,000 acres of milling timber. The Murimotu Block does not contain much good timber, it is estimated that there are about 1,500 acres which can be utilised. The southern portion of the Waiakaki Block contains some milling timber, and in the Rangitaua Block the line first enters the great Waimarino milling area. Here there are some 4,500 acres suitable for milling. Referring to the Tawhito, Ariki, and Ongamore Blocks, there are some 17,000 acres of good heavy rimu bush, with matai, hinau, maire, and kahikatea. After passing Ohakune the line enters the Raetihi Block, which is chiefly level and undulating country, magnificently timbered with rimu, matai, maire, kahikatea, and scattered totara, and in the future it will become the busy scene of extensive milling operations. There are also in this forest miro, tawhero, kahikatea, and yellow-pine. Mr. Lowe has advised me that yellow-pine exists in these forests, and, that being the case, it lends additional value and importance to the proposal to mill the timbers. The yellow-pine is used very extensively on the west coast of the South Island in lieu of totara for piles and sleepers.

9. Has that tree got a distinctive Maori name?—I do not know the Maori name.

10. Is there any pukatea in this forest? That is a timber of some value?—I do not know that there is. It generally grows in low swampy country, and is an indication of magnificent soil. Between the Raetihi Block and the Waimarino Plains the forest may be described chiefly as comprising rimu, matai, rata, maire, kahikatea, with more or less of the kaiwaka already mentioned. Leaving the Waimarino Plains and passing northward the forest is principally rimu. That is following down the course of the Pihopihotea and the Wakapapa Streams. Matai and totara are the principal trees near the plains as you approach Taumaranui.

11. Is not most of that totara about Taumaranui growing on Crown lands?—Yes. This map shows the Crown land tinted pink. The milling area is indicated upon the plan by green borders. The bush I have just been describing between Waimarino and Taumaranui is estimated to contain 20,000 acres of milling forests. The other great forest in this part of the country is that in the vicinity of Ohakune and Raetihi. I think I have generally indicated the localities and reported on the varieties and qualities of the timber. I will touch upon the area that might be considered suitable for dairying. Regarding the area of country along the North Island Main Trunk lines in the Wellington District suitable for dairying, I submit for the Committee a schedule of blocks, showing the area in each which Mr. H. J. Lowe estimates as suitable for dairying: this totals 120,000 acres. In making this estimate only the flat, undulating country, and lower hills along the route have been included. Generally, the area comprises all the land contiguous to the line about Mangaweka, Kawatau, and the Maungawairiki Valleys, and a very extensive area of country on both sides of the Rangitikei, Mowhango, and Hautapu Rivers. Te Kapua, which is the Sommerville Association Block, would furnish about 5,000 acres of dairying land. The northern portion of the Hunterville Association Blocks would contain about 7,000 acres; Raketepauma, Motukawa, and Rangiwaea comprise 20,000 acres. In Ohotu and adjacent blocks, including some Maori lands south of the railway route about Raetihi and Ohakune, 12,000 acres would be suitable for carrying cows. The dairying area near Raetihi is set down at 13,000 acres, and further off from Raetihi there are 10,000 acres. These are the principal areas which are believed to be suitable for dairying. The industry, as I have already stated, has been initiated. There are factories or creameries eastward of Mangaweka, at Rangiwaea and Ruahine. Companies have been formed, and steps have been taken, to establish a factory at Taihape, and a creamery at Tarere, near Utiku, and it is understood that the Hautapu Village settlers, and those in the Sommerville Block, are also moving in the direction of establishing a creamery in their midst. At Raetihi a splendid dairy factory has been running for some time. A creamery exists at Ohakune, and another at Mr. McLaren's, on the Pipiriki Road. Taking what I consider to be a safe and moderate estimate of the carrying-capacity of these 120,000 acres, I see no reason to doubt but that 30,000 cows will ultimately be carried on the lands, and when the forests have been completely removed, and additional feed can be provided, this number will be very greatly exceeded. Regarding the number of holdings, which under the direction of the Crown and the administration of the Land Board have been established on the route, I produce a return showing that they amount to 665. Taking the order in which they appear here, the principal settlements are in the Marton, Waimarino, Wanganui United, and Clifton Farm-homestead Blocks. Contiguous to the Pipiriki Road there are 26 settlers; in the Rangiwaea Block, 23; the Ponuiotane comprises 65; Sommerville, 31; the Palmerston Knights of Labour, 48; and at Awarua there are 151 holdings. I have no information as to the total number of people which occupy these blocks.

12. *The Chairman.*] There is one question I should like to ask, but before putting the question I wish to state that it has been urged that the present line of railway should be diverted from Ohakune, *via* Raetihi, to Pipiriki, and from thence to Tongarakau. What is your opinion of the suitability of that part of the country for settlement, and what is its accessibility? Is the country