

34. Mr. Dalziell asked you if with railway facilities, and you said Yes?—Well, the railway does not make much difference to the value of the land. There is an area of 800,000 acres, and in a great portion of that the railway is there now.

35. Do not railway facilities increase the value of land?—Were it not for the Taupo Totara Timber Company's line being there now I should take quite half that off for the value of the part that is served by the line; it is not worth 5s. an acre without that.

36. If the present company's line has increased your estimate, why would not the extension of the line still increase the value of the land?—That is only sixteen miles further on. It is there now.

37. You contend that putting down this line would benefit you materially, and other settlers?—The development of the Native land would. The putting-down of that line would not make one iota of difference to me, except it would be the means of putting value on certain lands by the expenditure of money, and by my being nearer a centre.

38. And enabling the settlers to get fertilizers at a cheaper rate?—Yes.

39. Mr. MacDonald.] Where are your 8,000 acres situated?—Four miles from the Lake Rotoiti.

40. Mr. Greenslade.] This line would not go through your property?—No, nowhere near it.

THURSDAY, 12TH OCTOBER, 1911.

W. C. KENSINGTON, Under-Secretary for Lands, examined. (No. 6.)

1. *The Chairman.*] The Committee has asked me to request your attendance to-day so that you may give the Committee information in your possession with regard to the lands sought to be acquired by the petitioners. You have probably seen the petition?—No, but I know all about it.

2. Would you like to give a statement of your own?—I presume that the information the Committee requires from me is as to the area of Crown lands that might be influenced by the proposed extension of the company's railway-line, and the general character of the soil, and then that I should be ready to answer any questions.

3. Yes?—I produce a map on a scale of four miles to the inch showing in pink the various Crown lands within a radius of thirty miles from the town of Taupo. The whole of these lands I do not consider would be influenced by this proposed railway-extension. I think the lands that are marked red, the total areas of which I will give, may be considered as being more or less within the influence of the proposed extension. The map will be placed before the Committee. I think there are about 166,800 acres of Crown land that might be said to be very nearly influenced by the proposed extension.

4. Mr. Newman.] Benefited by it?—Yes. I want the Committee to clearly understand that I am not expressing any opinion as to the necessity of the proposed extension. There are 166,800 acres of Crown lands which would be more immediately benefited by the proposed extension.

5. Mr. Myers.] Is that indicated by the red marks on your map?—No; I have drawn a thirty-mile radius from the town of Taupo. The present terminus of the Taupo Totara Timber Company's railway-line is shown on the map by a blue line. The actual distance in a direct line from the end of the railway-line to the town of Taupo is between twelve and thirteen miles. Then there are another 184,441 acres that would be benefited outside the first area I mentioned—that is to say, benefited in a secondary degree. These areas make a total of 351,241 acres of Crown lands which I consider would be benefited by the railway-extension. There is a further area of 64,000 acres of Crown lands, but I consider that would come within the influence of the Rotorua railway-line and not so much within the influence of this proposed extension. I have now dealt with 415,241 acres of Crown lands, and even part of the 64,000 acres comes within the thirty-mile radius from the town of Taupo. Perhaps I had better now speak as to the general quality of the soil. I know the whole of these lands, although I have not been all over them. I have seen the rest of the land from the summit of Tauhara Mountain. The areas within the limits of the 166,800 acres I mentioned are of a variety of quality of soil, mostly what I should call pumice and gravel formation. Wherever the land is forest-covered there is a far better quality, there being a good deal of soil upon it. With regard to the lands that are immediately benefited, the greater portion is also of a light pumice formation. The same remark applies to the 184,000 acres and the open portion, and any forest originally existing upon it has been burned long ago, and apparently there is a little soil mixed with the pumice. Then, we have lands that are just within and partly outside the thirty-mile radius which are more or less heavy forest lands. These are of a fairly good quality. These would come partly within the 184,000 acres. The quality of the land not covered with forest is light pumice and gravel land. I said that the greater portion of the Crown lands within the second area of 184,441 acres was mostly light pumice land with a very little soil mixed with it in parts, but that the other portion which is just on the verge or edge of the thirty-mile radius is chiefly forest land, and most of it is of fairly good quality.

6. Mr. Reed.] Is the forest on it marketable timber?—I am coming to that. The forest on these lands lying considerably to the east of the town of Taupo contains more or less marketable timber, but it is not considered to be of very good quality—that is to say, it is chiefly mixed forest. The Whirinaki and Heruiwi blocks are considered to be of good quality, but the other areas are not of very good quality. That is on the eastern side already referred to.

7. Does it contain totara and rimu?—The Department has not obtained proper reports on this land yet: it has only had a general and superficial examination. The reports are to the effect that there is timber of all kinds scattered all through these lands, but not of sufficient marketable quality. I am speaking now of the Whirinaki and Heruiwi blocks, and also of the Pohokura Block, which is also Crown land.