

14. Yes?—I cannot answer that question, but I suppose it could be.

15. Have you not told the Committee that the country is open?—I also said that there is no road constructed at present.

16. Could not the settlers from Mokai, and other points before you come to Mokai, by means of bullock-drays or by other means which settlers contrive to get their goods carried, get their manure delivered upon their sections at reasonable rates?—I am not prepared to say that settlers could not get manures on to their sections, but it would be very costly indeed. That is the whole point. By the time the manures were delivered at Mokai from Auckland and then carted to their sections the cost would be very great.

17. I am referring to the cartage?—I think it could be carted.

18. At a reasonable cost?—That I am not able to say.

19. You said that the unreasonable cost of cartage was the deterrent?—I said there had not been any demand for this land except during the last two years, when there had been an awakening of public opinion as to the value of pumice lands.

20. Will you think it over again and say whether it was during the last two years that this awakening took place?—I said "two years."

21. Is it not a fact that this change of opinion took place much more than two years ago?—Quite possibly. I am only speaking of my own observations. It might have been three or four years, or as far back as five years ago.

22. You expressed an opinion that this Government land could be occupied in from 300- to 500-acre areas?—Yes, up to 800.

23. Do you give the Committee this information from your own personal experience?—It is my own personal opinion. I want you to distinctly understand that.

24. Have you been a practical farmer?—No, I am not, I am sorry to say. You will have the evidence of practical farmers, which will be of infinitely more value than mine.

25. Will you explain to us why a farmer in a large way with proper equipment, with the latest labour-saving appliances and a sufficiency of capital, could not farm as profitably—I am looking at it from a narrow business point of view, not from the value to the country in the matter of close settlement—on those lands, as a small farmer with from 300 to 500 acres could do?—It is a question not only of enormous capital, but of closer cultivation of the land. What I think pumice land requires is that it should first be cleared from the fern, then ploughed, disced, and manured, then sown down in grass with 2 cwt. of manure to the acre. Probably after three years you would require to plough it again. Every time you bring it into cultivation and plough it the land gets better. The consolidated soil from below that is brought up is often much better than the surface soil.

26. You make a distinction between pumice so called and the soil referred to in the printed evidence on some of the land where there is a very little soil, the rest being pumice and gravel?—Yes.

27. What is your opinion as to the probable benefit to be derived from continuing the manuring, say, after a dozen years hence? Would the manure have the same beneficial effect after cultivation, say, after ten years, as it has now?—That is a question entirely for experts to answer: I am not a farmer. I could not answer it because I could not speak from my own experience.

28. You referred to the extraordinary growth of timber at Waiotapu?—Yes.

29. Is that any guide as to what would be produced in the way of ordinary farm-crops?—Yes. I think the capacity of the soil is very much better than we imagined. Looking at the land no one would think there was so much possibilities of growth in the pumice soil.

30. How would you apply that to the poor land in the north of Auckland, which grows such magnificent kauri timber: you would not call the soil which grows such timber a first-class soil for farming purposes?—The kauri may be thousands of years old. A good deal of that soil may originally have been splendid, and been absolutely exhausted by the kauri.

31. *Mr. Hindmarsh.*] You would not seriously recommend a system of intense cultivation on this soil?—Yes, I would, under the conditions I have mentioned.

32. Most of this land is covered with tussock-grass?—No, fern.

33. Is it anything like the land between Waimarino and Tokaanu?—Some parts of that land are very poor.

34. You do not suggest that farmers would lease that land?—A few years ago they would not have dreamt of taking up the land for turnip crops, but they are doing so now.

35. Have you read what Mr. Bailey says in the *Journal of Agriculture* as to pumice lands?—I think the proper thing is to take the evidence of settlers themselves.

36. To be straight, you do not know anything of the value of these pumice lands?—I do. I have seen exactly what has been done, and have watched them very carefully for years. I venture to say that in five or six years you will find pumice land occupied by people who would not previously have looked at it.

37. You say it can be improved by the application of phosphates?—Yes.

38. There is a splendid climate?—Yes. I am not pretending to say what class of manure the farmers should use.

39. Are you aware that Mr. Thomas Mackenzie proposed to establish a small farm up there to find out whether anything could be done with these pumice lands or not?—I know the Agricultural Department has been making experiments.

40. They brought the soil down here and analysed it?—They experimented on a place between Galatea and Taupo. I am referring to the printed evidence given by Mr. Clifton last year.

41. *Mr. MacDonald.*] In reply to Mr. Buchanan you said you were not a farmer?—Yes.

42. You know that the country around Rotorua is practically the same as that from Mokai to Taupo?—Yes, I have known that since 1870.