

112. No. How would you account for the failure of the crop of oats?—I presume that when you burn the forest there is potash left, and the potatoes had practically exhausted that class of land, and they had put no manure in afterwards. Karioi is very much colder than anywhere else.

113. Do potatoes suffer from excessive cold?—Yes, from frosts, certainly.

F. C. BARNETT sworn and examined. (No. 3.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—Settler, at Putaruru.

2. Do you desire to make a statement?—I would be pleased just to say a few words expressing briefly my experience as a farmer at Putaruru. I am a Crown tenant, and took up my first land something like seven years ago. Of course, this land was all held by the Thames Valley Company, and was not open for selection until acquired by the Government, and that is the reason why it was not taken up and put into small settlements before. However, the Government took it over then, and cut it up into closer settlements, varying—the majority of it—from 300 to 450 and 500 acres. The trouble was that there was no creamery in the vicinity, although the people had gone on the land and proved it to be capable of producing grass and milk. However, I attended a public meeting there at which a resolution was passed to write to the Dairy Farmers' Association inviting them to come and erect a creamery. When they received our note they held a meeting, at which one of the directors, who had been over this country some twenty years previously, made a statement that he thought it was quite out of the question, for the land up there was utterly useless. However, after a debate, it was decided that they would come up and interview the settlers at Putaruru. The settlers met them at the train and drove them all round the farms that had recently been taken up, and that night they held a meeting at which Mr. Spragg briefly stated to the settlers the opinions expressed by the director when our note was received. However, he said, he would ask that gentleman to get up now and say if he was in a position to repeat his statement. The director rose up and said, "It is quite true that when I received your correspondence I made a statement at the meeting that the application was absolutely useless so far as this country was concerned. However, we decided to come here and see the country in its present state, and it gives me pleasure to state that the opinion I expressed is absolutely wrong. The country has so changed within the last couple of years that I have every confidence now in recommending our company to establish a creamery."

3. Did they establish a creamery?—Yes, they immediately did so.

4. About how long ago?—About six years ago. There had been no creamery within practically twenty-five miles of the place, and immediately the creamery was erected. There are now no fewer than four creameries within a radius of twelve miles, and one cheese-factory also within a few miles of Putaruru. That is absolute proof that the land is capable of closer settlement. There is no need to explain that no company would erect four creameries and a cheese-factory unless they could see absolute proof that the country was worthy of it.

5. What is the class of land?—It is similar land all through. I have been there twenty-eight years, and am practically the oldest settler there. I have only been farming at Putaruru since the land was opened.

6. *Hon. Sir J. Findlay.*] What area do you farm?—407 acres. It is the same class of land as the pumice country. When the land was thrown open it absolutely went begging for tenants. However, I took the opportunity to go there when I saw that the only trouble was the want of manure, and I came close to the railway, where there would be no expense in carting it. I might say that the first place I was at was Waotu. To show you what the backblockers have to put up with, practically up to two years ago we had no Government road to Waotu, but during the last two years a good road has been made. Waotu is within twelve miles of Putaruru. I was practically three miles beyond that, or fifteen miles away from Putaruru. It was very awkward to cart manure, but we managed all right, because I hold the farm to-day and did not have to sell it to get out of it.

7. *Mr. Buick.*] Do you consider the whole success of that company is due to the bringing-in of the railway?—Yes, that is absolutely the secret. All this country is called pumice country around Putaruru and Lichfield, and I am happy to be able to say that a few months ago I had the pleasure of driving the member for the district round the country and showing him turnip land which had 800 sheep on portion of it. It was absolute proof that with ordinary cultivation and treatment it will produce turnips equal to any other land.

8. *The Chairman.*] Was that on your farm?—No, about half a mile away. It was on the Taupo Totara Timber Company's railway-line. I also took him to my place, where I showed him 70 or 80 acres of young grass. Sowing was completed in April, and it was equal to any young grass within thirty miles of the district. It was equal to the best at Matamata and Cambridge. You may ask me what is the treatment to get such produce off the land. I have a few notes here that I will read. One refers to the person who sits down and pays for everything done, and the other refers to the person who does the whole of the work himself. It will cover what I heard asked with reference to large areas and small areas: Ploughing, 8s. per acre; discing, 2s. per acre; harrowing, 1s. per acre; rolling, 2s. per acre; drilling, 2s. 6d. per acre. Now, this is practically preparing the ground to produce what I have just said with regard to turnips and grass. That is a cost of 15s. 6d. per acre. Now, the grass-seed, roughly, costs £1 an acre. The manure some people put in is 2½ cwt. I believe where the turnips were sown it was 2½ cwt.; but my own was 2¾ cwt. for the grass. The total cost when doing your own work is £1 15s.—that is, from the closer-settlement point of view. When you pay for your labour it will cost you £2 10s. 6d. per acre.

9. *Mr. Wilson.*] What manure did you use?—I used on the ploughing super. and guano, half and half. Manures vary greatly in value. That shows you the difference between closer