

27. Can you say how the quality of that land generally compares with the land you farmed at Rangitaiki and Opepe?—It is very similar. Some of the places are very inferior, but others are equally as good.

28. How would the average of this large area [map referred to] compare with the quality of the farms you had?—Most of it is a good deal better, particularly the lands on the western side of the lake.

29. Can we say that, on the average, it is as good?—Yes.

30. May I take it, shortly, that the areas you farmed showed that the land is capable of profitable farming providing there was access to it?—Yes.

31. It is not the poverty of the soil but the expense of cartage which is the difficulty?—That is so. The old settlers know it is not the soil. It is good fruit country, but the frost is a bit against it. Taking it all round it is good fruit country.

32. What access is there to these lands south of the Totara Timber Company's mills, including Tokaanu and the lands east and west of Taupo?—There is absolutely none. That is what has killed the place all through.

33. It is lack of access that has killed the whole place?—Yes.

34. Where you were farming at Opepe, where did you get your stuff from?—Napier.

35. What was the freight?—It was as high as £12 a ton, and I have known it to be £24 down to Napier, and £5 to Tarawera—£12 when I left Napier.

36. What is the nature of the land about Tokaanu?—The bulk of it is good farming land, but you lose a good deal of the pumice there. All the flats were growing wheat, and there is grass on the hills.

37. You are a coach-driver and have had large experience of the access to this country?—Yes.

38. And you have seen this map showing the boundaries?—Yes.

39. Would this area from Putaruru down to Waipahihi be served by the railway?—Yes.

40. That is, from north to south?—Yes.

41. And from the watershed of the eastern side of Lake Taupo to beyond Tarawera?—Yes, up as far as Herewihi.

42. Your opinion is that the whole of this area will be served by the railway if completed to Taupo?—Yes, and up to Titiraupunga—all of it can be served.

43. What you see coloured yellow on the map would be very well served by this railway when completed?—Yes, it would. There is no other way to serve it. The whole of the country has been isolated ever since I have been there.

44. If the railway were completed to Taupo it would serve the lake all round, and cheaply?—Yes, cheap enough for anything.

45. You know the bush country within this area coloured yellow?—Yes, I think I have been in most of it. The reason why I know the country so well is that I was butchering in Taupo before I started coaching, and used to buy cattle there from the Natives.

46. You visited the Native townships to buy cattle?—Yes, at all the settlements.

47. You know the forest country well?—Very well.

48. What sort of land is it?—Very good, and will take grass. Mr. Smith, at Taharua, has 600 acres that he has grassed—perhaps more.

49. How long ago?—I suppose it is ten years ago.

50. Is it good permanent grass?—It is good soil.

51. Where is it?—At Taharua.

52. How many miles is that from Taupo?—About twenty-three.

53. Can you give me any rough idea of how many acres of this forest land there is within the coloured portion?—I could not. There must be some hundreds of thousands of acres.

54. I point out to you the Taupo Totara Company's railway and show you country it serves [map referred to]?—Yes.

55. It is proposed by the Rotorua people to bring a line down here [map referred to], and I want you to tell the Committee what you think this Rotorua line would serve?—I suppose when it got to Taupo it would serve the area the same as the other line would. It would not serve anything to the westward of Taupo, or the westward of the other line.

56. Considering the country to be served, what line do you think would be the best?—The company's line, most undoubtedly—there is no question about it at all. It is already served up to the Waikato River.

57. I understand no one ever dies at Taupo, the climate is so good?—It is the best climate in New Zealand, bar none.

58. *The Chairman.*] You have been all over New Zealand?—No, but I would back it against any other place in New Zealand.

59. *Mr. Buchanan.*] You have given in evidence that you have been forty years and a half connected with Taupo?—Yes.

60. What may your age be?—I am sixty-four years of age, and a native of this city.

61. You have told about wheat being grown at Tokaanu and other places?—Yes.

62. Was wheat grown at Opepe?—No, I said Tokaanu, but oats at Opepe and oats at Rangitaiki.

63. Is there any wheat grown there now?—No.

64. Do you consider pumice land good wheat country?—Some of it is. Waiouru, for instance, is pumice land. There were 2 acres of wheat grown there as good as any that has been grown in this country. That is where I live at present, on the Main Trunk line.

65. Are you aware that there is a good deal more than pumice at Waiouru?—Yes.

66. Are you aware that there is a very free mixture of papa in the soil at Waiouru?—There might be.