

113. There was no one else there?—No, only the tribes. All the flats would grow wheat. There would probably be 30 acres altogether.

114. It would not run into hundreds or thousands?—No.

115. You spoke about thousands of acres being bush land?—Yes.

116. What is the nature of the bush?—Not a great deal of totara, but plenty of rimu and matai. A good deal of the totara was cut out years ago for telegraph-posts and for bridges and culverts.

117. You know these two lines of railway from Rotorua and Putaruru?—Yes.

118. Would the proposed railway from Taupo to Rotorua serve the country marked yellow from Taupo to Putaruru?—No, it would serve the Rotorua line.

119. You say all that pumice land responds kindly to manure?—Yes.

120. You think that cheap manure is the only thing that will enable that land to be worked?—Yes; that is, the bulk of it. There are a good many thousands of acres which require no manure. The bush land is good land—most of it, with mixed forest on it. There is one part of it birch—good red-birch.

121. *Mr. Collins.*] Have you ever had occasion to use the existing railway from Putaruru?—No.

122. You know the advantage of a railway with reasonable terms for passengers and freights?—Yes.

123. Supposing the present railway did provide a reasonable service at reasonable rates, all this part north of the junction would be already served by the present company's line?—Portion of it.

124. Which portion?—The lower portion, the Putaruru end.

125. You indicated that the whole of this block coloured on the plan as community-owned or Crown lands would be served by the proposed extension?—Yes.

126. If a proper service were provided this portion between Putaruru and Mokai would be served by the existing line?—Yes, to a certain extent.

127. Even if the proposed extension is made a certain amount of cartage will have to take place east and west?—Yes.

128. How long is it from the boundary to the Rangitoto B Block?—Over twenty miles.

129. *The Chairman.*] You spoke of a paddock which was in oats and afterwards in grass?—That was in Taupo. It had been in grass, I can safely say, twenty years or thereabouts—10 acres.

130. And the others?—The others had been manured with stable manure several times.

131. *Hon. Sir J. Findlay.*] Mr. Buick asked you with regard to the area you saw under wheat: you told him there was about 30 acres?—Yes.

132. Was there other land there of the same quality as that which was growing wheat?—Yes, plenty of it.

133. Looking at the area actually under wheat, what would be the total area at Tokaanu that would grow wheat, in your opinion?—There might be 2,000 or 3,000 acres, or there might be even more than that.

134. Mr. Collins asked you about the railway service, and he put it that if there was good railway service at reasonable rates there would be some gain to this country now?—Yes.

135. But suppose there was no obligation on the part of the company to run the railway once a week or once a month?—It would be useless, of course.

ALBERT ROTORUA GRAHAM sworn and examined. (No. 5.)

1. *Hon. Sir J. Findlay.*] You are going to read a statement, but, first of all, I want to see what your qualification is. You know this country coloured red and yellow on the map?—Yes.

2. What experience have you had on it?—I cannot say I have been brought up in the district, but I have been there at intervals practically throughout the whole of my life.

3. Taking the periods you have been there and adding them together they would extend to a great many years?—Yes. I am a barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court, and am residing at Wairakei, near Taupo, and am intimately acquainted with the country affected by both the Putaruru line and the suggested Rotorua line. I have been appointed to represent the Taupo Railway League and the residents of Taupo to lay their views before the Committee. I hold no brief for the Taupo Totara Timber Company, and do not come at their invitation. I should also state that my people own the block of land known as Wairakei. However, as both proposed lines will serve this block to about equal advantage, my people do not gain greater advantages in this respect by a line *via* Putaruru than by a line *via* Rotorua. In fact, from a tourist point of view, probably a line *via* Rotorua would suit us better. Having explained my position somewhat I now wish to lay before the Committee the views of the Taupo people and the Taupo Railway League. There are nearly 2,000,000 acres of land in the Taupo district at present lying waste and uncultivated, and a burden to the country generally. Nearly 400,000 acres of this consists of Crown land, 800,000 acres of Native land, and the balance privately owned land held in fairly large areas. The Crown lands are mostly unoccupied, and at present carry little else than rabbits, and cost the Government a considerable amount yearly for poisoning. The 800,000 acres of Native country is at present waste and unproductive, an excellent seedling-ground for noxious weeds, and a regular breeding-warren for rabbits—so much so that it is a great hardship upon the white settlers who have adjoining lands to be compelled to spend money in clearing their lands of rabbits, only to find the adjoining Native country the cause of the undoing of their good work. There is practically no fencing or subdividing in this huge area of country, which is at present practically in its virgin state. However, experiments have been made with the soil, which is pumiceous. These experiments have satisfied us that with