

approximate cost of the line is easily calculated. Taking the State railway as a standard the line from Rotorua to Taupo would cost about £400,000.

57. Has any trial survey been made?—No, but the figures I am quoting now are those of a flying survey made by the Chief Engineer.

58. Has any estimate been made of the cost of bridging the Waikato?—It does not cross the Waikato.

59. Are you responsible for the plan given in the pamphlet issued?—Yes, as one of the members of the Chamber of Commerce.

60. Will you look at that and then say that the railway does not cross the river [pamphlet referred to]? Does it go through Wairakei?—Yes, it touches Wairakei. According to the original idea it goes on the far side. It will give access to Wairakei.

61. Then it must cross the river twice. You did not draw the plan?—No.

62. And you have not considered what the bridges will cost?—No.

63. But you are assuming an expenditure of £400,000?—Yes.

64. What is the distance of the line considered necessary to connect Rotorua with Tauranga?—Twenty-two miles.

65. Have you any idea of the cost of that line?—No.

66. Would you be surprised to learn that it would cost £200,000?—I should be much surprised. I judge by my own observation and a statement made to me at different times by responsible Government officials and a Minister that the line could be easily constructed. No tunnels would be necessary, and to give the grade necessary their trial surveys show that it would be a remarkably easy one. I judge that it would therefore come considerably cheaper.

67. If we have an estimate of £400,000 for it, would you contradict that?—No.

68. Will you pledge your word that these two lines will not cost more than, £750,000 at least?—I am not inclined to pledge my word at all.

69. Do you say that the Rotorua-Tauranga line should be commenced before the Rotorua-Taupo line?—Yes, I do say that.

70. When that line is completed do you think the Government should then go on with the Rotorua-Taupo line?—Yes.

71. And you have every confidence that the Government are going to spend in this district the amount requisite to complete these two lines?—Yes, I have.

72. Within what time? You have not been a candidate for Parliament yet?—No. I have not had the experience and advantage you have had.

73. Including a defeat which is quite enjoyable. If you were a candidate for Parliament, in what time would you say these railway-lines would be completed?—Ask me as a private individual.

74. Within what time, then, do you think this large sum of money will be spent by the Government in completing these lines?—I think it possible, if the people of the Taupo and Rotorua districts realize what is best in their own interests, they will agitate and get them within five or six years.

75. Or it might take fifty?—It will not take that time.

76. If the people of Rotorua oppose the Taupo people all they know, is it likely they will be completed within fifty years?—Yes, I think it is reasonable to suppose so, considering the population in Rotorua and the district so far as Taupo.

77. You know that the tramway is not permitted to carry passengers?—The Rotorua people do not object to the company taking passengers over its tramway. I suppose it is purely a matter of self-interest on both sides.

78. Do you say that the territory west of the proposed Rotorua line would be better served by the Rotorua line than the Putaruru line?—No, I do not say that; but I say the line from Rotorua to Taupo would serve a larger area than the company's line, because it would open the Kaimangaroa Plains.

79. You say that the Rotorua-Taupo line would serve a larger area than the Putaruru-Taupo line?—I say it would serve just as big an area, and that it would serve the Kaimangaroa land.

80. The whole of your objections were based upon the assumption that this Putaruru-Taupo Railway was to be privately owned?—That is so.

81. Supposing it were not privately owned, but were bought by the Government and completed within eighteen months, would your objections still prevail?—My objections would cease.

82. I put this proposition to you because you are quite consistent. Last year when you were giving evidence you were asked by one of the members of the Committee, "Do the Rotorua people anticipate that trade is going to be developed and Taupo going to be a competitor with the Rotorua attractions, or do they consider their attractions will hold their own?" This is your answer: "We do not mind the Government taking over the line and carrying it as at present suggested right through." You have no objection, then, to the Government taking over the line and carrying it right through to Taupo?—No, except for the reasons I have stated in the comparison of cost to the settlers.

83. We are amending our proposal, and this is the proposal now of the company: the company offers to sell its railway completed to Taupo for £180,000?—I understand that.

84. We propose that immediately the Government buys an area of Native land, out of the proceeds of the sale of that land and the Crown land from time to time it should pay the total purchase-money to the company; that at the end of fifteen years, or a term to be agreed upon, the Government shall decide whether it will then take over the line—that is, to affirm the purchase or disaffirm the purchase; if it disaffirm the purchase any moneys paid to the company have to be returned to the Crown, and in the meantime the company gives a guarantee satisfactory to the Government that these moneys will be returned. The proposal is, therefore, that the com-