

*Mr. Massey:* You have seen figures in regard to stock sold there. Lambs sold on the Westfield Market five days off the field actually brought 10s. per head more than any other stock offered that day.

70. *The Chairman.*] Do you agree that the circumstances related by Mr. Massey obtain?—Yes.

71. Well, in view of that, what is the urgent necessity for the railway—if you can take stock off the land for five days and get such good prices?

*Mr. Massey:* My point is that, if a railway were provided, the people in the area could produce considerably more stock of similar quality, and they would be able to land it into the markets at considerably less cost.

72. *Mr. Kyle.*] Is the whole of your output of stock sent away fat, or as store stock?—I am dairying. I have never sent away fat cattle.

73. *Mr. Massey.*] You recognize that if a railway were provided the cost of transport would be considerably reduced?—There is no doubt about that, and the produce of the farmers would be considerably increased. That is the experience of my neighbour, and I know it is correct.

74. And it would have a big bearing on the settlement of that area?—Yes. My neighbour has to drive his fat lambs twenty or thirty miles, and he considers that he loses at least 1s. a day in transport. To drive fat lambs that distance would take three or four days, and he would have to stand that loss. In spite of topping the market, the loss to the individual farmer must be considerable on account of the lack of transport facilities.

75. *The Chairman.*] You have given a glowing account of this land. Do you know of any one who has left his farm?—I believe one or two settlers at Reporoa have left; but the number who leave compared with the number who stay is very small indeed.

76. Generally, they are doing well?—Generally, they are satisfied. I think most of them are doing exceptionally well, especially after being established for two or three years. It takes, to my mind, two or three years for the pastures to reach maturity. You then get much thicker sward and thicker growth of grass. You can get good growth in a year or two, but it improves with age. My older paddocks are my best. It is all a case of the soil and the use of the land.

77. Then the chief benefit to be derived from the railway would be that the settlers would make more profit?—Yes.

78. *Mr. Samuel.*] And there would be more settlement?—Yes.

79. If there were a railway to Reporoa, possibly no one would have left?—I do not think any one would have left.

80. And there would be a lot more settlers there?—Yes.

81. *Mr. Lye.*] We have had some very good accounts of the country, and plenty of confidence expressed in regard to it. Do you find that there is any difficulty in financing as regards the State Advances Office or private lending institutions?—Yes, the country is cried down from one end of the Dominion to the other.

82. *Mr. Kyle.*] By the Government money-lending concerns?—I would not like to say by the departmental officers.

83. *Mr. Lye.*] Can you advance any reason why, if the men apply up-to-date methods and fertilizers, it is difficult to finance either through the State Advances Department or through private lending institutions?—I can only put it down to the fact that the country has a bad name. If you give a dog a bad name you have settled him, have you not? It seems to me that the pumice country generally is cried down, and on that account people are chary about lending money on it.

84. Is that because of their careful policy?—I do not think so. I think they are lacking in knowledge.

85. *Mr. Makitanara.*] Would it be correct to say that some who have left Reporoa found it necessary to do so through bad management?—I think it was the natural result of putting returned men on to land when they had no inclination for farming and had no knowledge. I do not want to say that they were encouraged to go on the land, but the fact of the Government giving them the opportunity to go on and putting them on influenced men who were not born to be farmers and had no liking for farming to take up the land. The great majority of the Reporoa settlers have done well, and some are doing exceptionally well.

86. *The Chairman.*] Do you think it was the absence of a railway that sent those men off?—No, I do not think it was the absence of a railway altogether.

FREDERICK CARR ROLLETT, Agricultural Journalist, Editor *Weekly News*, Auckland, examined. (No. 5.)

*Witness:* I may say that I have had quite a long experience of the pumice lands. Their possibilities were shown to me when the Patetere areas were turned over and sold, about twenty-three or twenty-four years ago. I saw at that time, in the Lichfield district, that the land under cultivation was growing clover and turnips. I argued then that if the land could do that it could be made into good farm-land. After that I had the opportunity of going down to Mr. Vaile's place—in fact, it was before Mr. Vaile was there—and seeing the pumice country from Rotorua to Taupo, from Taupo to Rangipo and down to Waiouru, and further round the whole pumice plateau. I have seen a large number of the farmers and conversed with them. I am mentioning this to show that I have some experience of the area of land, and, to some extent, of its capabilities, because I have seen what has been done in the past twenty years. Personally, I am of the opinion that, from a national point of view, if this proposed railway from Rotorua to Taupo were built and an active policy of settlement started and carried out properly, a very large number of people could be settled on the land, and they would be successful on it. I do not say that they would make fortunes; but they could lead contented, prosperous lives, and in this way should settle to some extent a great national problem. We would relieve the cities to a considerable extent in the matter of unemployment, because men would naturally