

to create marvellous possibilities, if they will only handle the Crown and Native lands properly to help the Natives to become farmers, and assist any able-bodied man who wants to have land to take possession and work that land. The Government should give such men sufficient encouragement to enable them to make homes and a living. If that is done there will be provided immense possibilities for creating new wealth, and we will have a yeomanry of small-farm people firmly settled on the soil, keeping on improving the country year after year, and making it one of the most beautiful provinces. It is big enough to be a new province. There are 5,000,000 acres in the pumice area. It will not all be fed by this railway, but if you want to have the country settled you must build this railway, and that will enable settlers to make homes for themselves. The same thing will apply to all this other country; and there is no reason why, in a few years, you should not fill up these present empty spaces with prosperous farms and successful sawmills, and you will open up a wonderfully interesting tourist country. It is one of the most beautiful parts of New Zealand, although it looks so desolate under certain conditions.

5. *The Chairman.*] You have described a lot of the country on the railway on the east side?—Yes.

6. Is there much private plantation within the influence of the railway, in addition to the Government property?—Yes, a considerable amount. There is one block that belongs to an Australian company.

7. Is it planted?—Large areas are planted. The manager is Mr. Fail, and he showed me through this country. There is a private estate which has not been planted yet—Macklow brothers'. Here [indicated] is also the New Zealand Timberland property. They are beginning to plant there; they have nurseries and stock; they have some 2,000 acres under forest operations. There is a considerable amount planted. I do not think they have started on the Tauharo Block. There is bush land to the eastward in the Urewera country at the headwaters of the Whirinaki and some of the best land in the Urewera.

8. Is it good milling-timber?—Some of it is good milling-timber. I must express my surprise and indignation that the State has allowed so much of this nice easy country on the route of the Rotorua-Taupo line which could be turned into 70-acre and 80-acre farms—to be locked up in planted forests for a great number of years.

9. You admit that there is a vast area of land that is locked up in exotic forests, which you think was an unwise policy?—Yes, I do.

10. It is there, within the areas you have described to us?—Yes.

11. Well, now, is it your opinion, with all your experience of that district, that if a railway were put through as proposed, this land, which you have said is wonderful land for cutting up, could be closely settled? How could it be closely settled when this vast area of it has been put under forestry?—I do not see how you could do the two things, and if you put arable land into forests you will waste your money, or let it remain in forests.

12. My main point is that on the eastern side it is very largely already planted or being planted with forest-trees?—Yes.

13. And therefore it would not be available for use by the railway for twenty or thirty years, relying on the timber?—But if there is anything that will make that railway really necessary, it must be to work those timber forests.

14. You are relying, then, almost entirely, in that particular area, on the working of the timber?—I certainly say that the greater part of that land is in timber, owned either by the State or private individuals, and held for afforestation purposes.

15. Therefore there would be little or no land available there for closer settlement, without disturbing that timber?—When you say "little or no land," what do you mean? There are still large areas not planted in trees.

16. Well, I mean that a large area would not be available for closer settlement. Would not a vast area of that land be made unusable for cutting up?—If it is locked up in timber, a vast area would, undoubtedly.

17. Now, how far away is that land which you described south and west of Lake Taupo, from the nearest point of the railway-line?—I take it that that would come within the sphere of navigation of Lake Taupo—about ten or twelve miles from the lake.

18. How far is this land from the nearest point of the railway?—The lake is twelve miles across and twenty-five miles long.

19. Do you think it would be necessary to make subsidiary tram-lines to bring that timber in, if it were to be brought within the influence of the railway?—I think that is so; that is the usual procedure.

20. You said that the timber was some of the finest timber in New Zealand?—Yes.

21. On what do you base that judgment?—On the appearance of the trees—their height and their size, and on the fact that a large number of them are totara.

22. From your casual observation?—Yes, and trained observation—not the casual observation of a man who does not know timber when he sees it.

23. Did you ride through it?—I rode through it, but I did not measure it at all.

24. What point do you consider is the southernmost point of the railway?—There you raise a big question.

25. Where do you consider it would be?—Although it is called the Rotorua-Taupo Railway, and I take it that it is intended to terminate for the time at Taupo, but its first objective would be Reporoa.

26. You contend that the railway as approved is to Reporoa only: is that your view?—The construction of the railway was authorized to Reporoa, but the route of the line as approved by Parliament was from Rotorua to Taupo.