

170. But he has been over it?—Not in the way I have. If Mr. Martin knows the whole of that country, I would like to take him over it again, and show him parts of it that he has not seen.

171. Mr. Martin told us that the bulk of that country was capable of successful farming. You do not agree with his evidence?—Not on that point.

172. Will you agree that Mr. Martin is a successful farmer?—I agree that he is a good farmer.

173. And that he knows a good deal about pumice country?—I suppose he does.

174. You agree with his evidence as far as the whole of the Rotorua country is concerned?—I did not hear the whole of his evidence. All I can agree upon is that he is evidently a good farmer. I will not say whether he is a successful farmer or not—I have not seen his balance-sheets.

175. Well, you do not agree with Mr. Martin when he says that a great proportion of the Taupo land is capable of successful farming?—I do not agree with anybody who says that the Taupo land is a rich province, or can be farmed successfully.

176. In your own opinion this country is not good country for farming?—No.

177. With the exception of 100,000 acres?—I say that the bulk of it is not fit for farming.

178. You know Mr. Parsons?—Yes. I gave evidence before the Lands Committee about Mr. Parsons's country.

179. If Mr. Parsons is of opinion that the bulk of the Taupo country is capable of profitable farming, you do not agree with him?—I do not.

180. *Mr. Semple.* You say you do know something about Putaruru? Do you know Mr. Leslie's farm?—Yes.

181. Do you know what Mr. Leslie paid per acre?—No.

182. I am led to believe that he paid £5 per acre. Do you know anything about his financial position?—No.

183. Would you dispute a statement that he has netted in the last year £800 of income?—If he says so I would not say he did not.

184. Is it not a fact that while Mr. Leslie was making good on this farm with no assistance from the Government—indeed, with the hostility of the heads of Departments—scores of other returned soldiers were going off the land, and they were being assisted by the Government?—I do not know of them going off in that district.

185. Is it not a fact that the heads of the Departments have never encouraged settlement at Putaruru?—I will say, as a soldier myself, that I do not think any Government has done more for its soldiers than the New Zealand Government.

186. Did the Departments not always view the Putaruru lands with hostility?—Not the Soldiers Settlement Department. You must remember that the Departments are entirely separate.

187. I am talking about the settlement generally?—I have nothing to do with the State Advances attitude on the Tokoroa land, and nothing to do with the Valuation Department.

188. But you would not deny it when I say that the heads of the Departments always refused to assist farmers in that area, because they claimed that the land was not fit for settlement?—I have never heard about that.

189. *Mr. Lye.* By virtue of the position you hold as Field Inspector of the Crown Lands and Survey Department, I presume that you have been brought into contact with the soldier settlers at Reporoa?—Very closely.

190. You said there were 29,000 acres originally in the block?—Yes.

191. And that there are to-day 7,500 acres occupied by some thirty-five soldier settlers?—About 7,800 acres.

192. What happened to the rest of the land?—It was sold to the State Forest Service.

193. Do you know that many of the original settlers abandoned their holdings?—Quite a number abandoned their holdings in the original settlement.

194. Was that largely through cattle-sickness?—In the first place a lot of the settlement was very high-priced, but an adjustment has been made. They all claimed that there was a certain amount of cattle-sickness.

195. You are of opinion that the Reporoa land comprises some of the best land in the pumice area?—Reporoa is undoubtedly the best area in the Taupo region.

196. What can you say about the butterfat returns?—The highest average record I know for Reporoa is about 171 lb. Here is the statement made by Mr. Alexander before the South Auckland Land Board, and he is one of the best settlers in the district. His area is 91 acres, and he was asked how many cows he was milking. He said: "The first year on the 91 acres I milked twenty-seven cows, and during the 1926-27 season thirty to thirty-two cows. I might state that as far as I am concerned I consider that I could not make a do of it on the area that comprises my section. I have been putting the small section of 18 acres under crop for main winter feed, and have come to an arrangement with my neighbour whereby I do the work and share in a crop of 30 acres. That is how I have overcome the difficulties, and in the face of that you can hardly credit my butterfat returns to my 91 acres." When he was asked how many cows his section would carry in itself, he answered: "Thirty is the limit, absolutely. I would like to say also that the herds on the average are well behind the Waikato, on account of the short season. I had 5,700 lb. butterfat from thirty-two cows, and then I had the 91 acres all grass—the whole lot has been top-dressed, and the pasture is in pretty good heart—and I had this 18 acres of Section 23 temporary lease, and have been working with my neighbour 'fifty-fifty.' It is safe to say that my outside labour has been worth from £70 to £80 each winter. To keep things going it has been necessary for me to go out and work."

197. Did not the butterfat return you have quoted come largely from the use of some of the swamp land in the Reporoa settlement?—Yes.

198. Would the figures be as good if the farm were on average pumice land?—No possible chance.