

matter of vital moment to the future of an important part of the Dominion, and should be judged as such. If the principle so long affirmed of State railways is to be set aside, it opens up the whole question of private charters with all its attendant undemocratic eventualities.

5. *Mr. Forbes.*] With regard to the railway: the idea was to come from Rotorua through Taupo and join the North Island Main Trunk line. If the Taupo Railway comes that way, that would not interfere with the through traffic to Rotorua, would it?—It would interfere in this way: at the present time the only way in which you can get to Taupo per medium of the railway is by going from here to Putaruru.

6. Your contention is that the traffic would be developed by the Taupo Totara Timber Company's line instead of its going on to Rotorua, and then on to Auckland?—Yes. The route we suggest is passing their route. There is a difference of one hundred miles between the present arrangement and the arrangement we have been advocating for some time, but which, for the reason that the Premier has on several occasions told us that they did not want to consider any line from Rotorua to Taupo until such time as the East Coast line was made—it was pointed out then that a very small length of line would connect Rotorua with the East Coast—then that was the time for the Taupo-Rotorua line to come up, and we have let the matter stand in abeyance.

7. The proposed new line would tap good working land for settlement. Does it open up country fit for settlement?—Yes, some of it is settled at the present time. The land is, of course, pumice land—not first-class or second-class land. The whole of that valley is very good land indeed, although at the end nearest the top the land is comparatively speaking poor, and requires special knowledge. The ordinary farmer would not necessarily find his experience gained in other parts of the Dominion of value to him there.

8. The opinion of your Chamber is that to allow the linking up of this service at Taupo to Putaruru would be against the interests of the State, who are the owners of thermal springs there?—Yes.

9. You say that connecting the through line with the Main Trunk is the only way in which it should be done?—Yes.

10. *Mr. Reed.*] I did not quite understand the antagonism of Rotorua against this line. Is it that they contemplate that the opening-up of Taupo by railway is going to take tourists to Taupo in preference to Rotorua?—Tourists naturally follow the cheapest route of travel.

11. Tourists will go to Taupo and exclude the Rotorua trip altogether?—We maintain that as far as the attractions of both places are concerned we do not feel the competition, otherwise we would never have urged for the construction of a Taupo-Rotorua Railway. We say that, seeing that this district has been locked up for such a number of years, ostensibly under the principle that it was held on the same lines as a big national park, that it was being conserved to a certain extent until such times as the population increased and the monetary power of the country increased to open it up with State railways and under State ownership.

12. You are not frightened of the competition of Taupo with Rotorua?—No.

13. The people will go to Rotorua or any such tourist resort as readily in the future as in the past, even with the opening of the Taupo district by railway. Do 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?—We do not mind the Government taking over the line and carrying it as at present suggested right through.

14. It is not the matter of the construction of the line, or private ownership?—It would be to their interests. I would push all the tourists along that line and get every shilling out of them I could as a business proposition.

15. Coming to another question: Tourists going to Rotorua and seeing the sights at Rotorua then desire to go on to Taupo. Which route do they prefer to go by—do they prefer to go back to Rotorua or go overland by motor-car?—If owners, they go by motor-car—or they can coach.

16. What is the difference?—By the motor-car it will take five persons for £6—a distance of fifty miles.

17. That would be five persons for £6—24s. a piece, single?—You can go there and back for that if you like.

18. And back at once, you mean—the same day?—Yes.

19. For two persons it would cost £6 too?—If they took a private car.

20. The railway is much cheaper than that?—It is the cheaper way by coach.

21. The coach takes all day?—Yes.

22. You say that you would not oppose the railway being constructed by the Government?—No.

23. Supposing the Government cannot carry the work out, would you then oppose the private company undertaking that work under any conditions at all?—Under the present conditions?

24. Under any conditions. Are there conditions under which you would permit the construction of that railway *via* Taupo?—No.

25. You would oppose it *in toto*?—Yes.

26. It comes to this: you say the line should be constructed by the Government or not constructed at all?—Yes.

27. And if the Government has not got the money to construct the line it should not be constructed?—You tell me the Government have not got the money.

28. Taking into consideration that other lines are deserving of attention before this line—that they take preference to this line: that being so, they have not got the money?—That is so. We consider that we have been extremely reasonable in the question of petitioning for railways. We all along have recognized that the route passing through the most thermal activities is from Rotorua *via* Waiotapu on to Taupo. Such cannot be claimed for the route from Putaruru to Taupo. We know it is impossible to ask the Government to immediately put into operation all lines. With the progress the colony has made it does not seem too much to say that in three or four years quite a different aspect will be put upon this line.