

31. Then, the land you are submitting at the end of this month is the first occasion on which you have submitted land to auction at Taupo?—It is not to be submitted to public auction. The Crown offers small areas at auction occasionally in the town and suburbs, but these lands are open for application. It was subdivided owing to applications.

32. Up to the present there has been no outlet for these half-million acres of land?—That is so.

33. And you think the advent of the railway would change the aspect of affairs in that direction?—I do undoubtedly.

34. You are satisfied from the experiments you have seen made that the lands can be made productive?—Yes, with, of course, considerable expenditure. I want that to be clearly understood.

35. If a certain amount of expenditure were incurred you are satisfied that settlement would take place and the value of the adjoining land would be enhanced?—I am.

36. You are perfectly satisfied that the productivity of the pumice lands has got beyond the experimental stage?—Yes, I think so.

37. *Mr. Newman.*] In fixing the price at £1 19s. per acre it is not sold as grazing-land?—No, it is the residential value. These lands have a special value through their vicinity to the lake, and therefore the values put upon them are not the intrinsic values for agricultural and pastoral purposes.

38. Can you state the cost of making these pumice lands productive?—No. I have seen so many statements which have been made with regard to the amount of manuring and so on, but I cannot say what the cost would be from my own practical knowledge.

39. Would you be surprised to hear that the manure would not last any time—that it goes through the land and disappears?—I can well understand that it requires renewing.

40. So that if you manure it again and again it is not lasting?—I am afraid that can be said of other lands which are in exactly the same position.

41. And is this land hilly or flat?—It is mostly undulating country. From the nature of the country it is intersected by washouts and watercourses.

42. Is the land fairly well watered?—Yes, most of it, by good running streams.

43. Would the value of the land shown on the poster be a fair average for all the land within the thirty-mile radius?—No. The part marked off for the small grazing-runs is not put at values which would be fair values for the other lands.

44. When the bush land is cleared will it carry sheep well?—I think it will.

45. Have they any of that disease which has been spoken of?—No, I have not heard of it in that neighbourhood.

46. Fruit-trees seem to grow better than anything else on that land? Yes, fruit and root crops up to the present time; but when the land is consolidated by sheep running over it the clover grows remarkably well.

47. Is there much swamp land?—There are a few swamps, but there are not very large swamp areas on the Crown land.

48. Is there likely to be much dairying done in that country?—I cannot say. I am only speaking of our Crown lands, not of the private lands.

49. *Mr. Fraser.*] You gave us some evidence about two blocks containing 351,000 acres, all within the thirty-mile radius of Taupo?—Yes.

50. Have you seen the plan of the area of which this Committee has more particularly to deal with, and are those blocks comprised within the green-line area?—As far as I can judge from the map, most of them are. Some of the areas I have given are outside the green line.

51. You have made no reference to the Native lands?—No.

52. Do you know that the Native lands constitute the greater portion of this block marked yellow?—Yes, it does consist of Native land in the greater part.

53. Can you give the Committee any evidence with regard to the character of these Native lands?—No, I have not looked into that question at all. The evidence I was supposed to give to-day was in reference to the Crown lands.

54. Have you been over this block of country comprised within the green line?—Yes, I have been all over it.

55. Can you not form some idea by which you could convey to the Committee your impression of that country?—Yes. The greater part of the Native lands shown within the green line are on the eastern side of Lake Taupo, and are of very much the same quality as the Crown lands. The Native lands to the south-east of Taupo are also similar in quality, except that they extend back more into the slate country. The lands on the western side of Taupo, or a good portion of them, are forest lands, and all the forest lands have turned out to be, generally speaking, of very good quality. The Native lands near the Waikato River are the same, apparently—inferior pumice lands—as are the Crown lands. That is speaking from memory. I did not look into the question before I came here.

56. The Crown lands you referred to, then, would include the whole of those blocks marked red?—Yes, they are very much the same.

57. This part marked "Kaingaroa": is not that where the white tussock is growing?—Yes.

58. What is the character of that land?—Mostly open tussocky land. It is similar to the land which Mr. Vaile is working: it is almost the same quality of land.

59. You say this western side is mostly forest land?—Yes.

60. What character of forest is it?—That I do not know; I have never been through it. As far as I know, the part on the western side close to the lake is generally mixed forest, containing, as is understood, a fairly good quantity of milling-timber.

61. There is a road through this western end of Lake Taupo going over towards the Wanganui River?—There is no formed road, but there is a road through from Tokaanu to Waiouru, and it is a good road.