

99. And that in the pumice area you will depend almost entirely on fertilizers for the development of the land?—Yes, we recognize that we must have fertilizers.

100. And the haulage charges must be taken into consideration?—Yes.

101. *The Chairman.*] As you are so largely dependent on fertilizers there, and as the railway carries fertilizers at a very cheap rate, how would that affect a railway-line?—The more fertilizers carried by the railway into that country the greater will be the outward railway freight offering. There will be more return freight for the railway: the more fertilizers, the more produce and the more traffic.

102. You admit that there would be little or nothing in freight out of the fertilizers?—Yes, but that applies to any district. A settler going into that district with a handicap of £1 a ton is almost out of it as against a man nearer the railway.

103. *Mr. Massey.*] Have you any idea as to how the production has increased in the Auckland District during recent years?—I could not give you figures, but I know it has increased tremendously owing to the cheapness of the fertilizers, and we see the result now in the exports of our dairy-produce.

104. Speaking from memory, I believe that half of the butter exported from New Zealand is exported from the Port of Auckland?—I believe that is so.

105. *Mr. Vaile.*] About droving in this district which is being compared with ours, do you know whether there is good feed for the stock as it goes along the road?—I do not know. There is absolutely no feed in our district. There are small stock-paddocks used for sheep and cattle, but they have no growth, as they are being used continually.

106. There is no farm you can run your stock into?—No.

107. It is just a length of country covered with scrub?—Yes.

108. *The Chairman.*] You say there is no growth?—There happens to be an area which is not suitable. The country through which the road passes is more or less a narrow valley until you arrive at these plains.

109. Is that typical of the country?—Oh, no—about three miles out from Rotorua, to the first stock-paddock.

110. Then those conditions would not apply, except along this particular part?—No.

111. *Mr. Vaile.*] Do you know of any district in the Auckland Province where you can depasture cattle on the scrub?—No. In the olden days, when bringing cattle from North Auckland, they had to go through scrub and tea-tree.

112. And you never brought them to Auckland fat?—No, mostly store cattle.

113. *Mr. Massey.*] Do you know the Karaka district, between Drury and Pukekohe?—Yes, where the gorse is plentiful.

114. How many years ago did you know it?—I am not intimately acquainted with it, but I have passed through it during the last thirty years.

115. Have you passed through in the last year or two?—No, not off the railway.

WILLIAM JOHN PARSONS, of Guthrie, near Rotorua, Farmer, examined. (No. 4.)

*Witness:* I come before you to-day with a good deal of diffidence. I feel this way: that the question of the Taupo Railway has resolved itself, as the Chairman just now remarked, to a certain extent to sides with regard to the political situation.

*The Chairman:* I did not say that.

*Witness:* You did not mention the political situation. You said "the other side."

*The Chairman:* I was not referring to politics. No question of politics enters into this at all.

*Witness:* As far as I am concerned, there is absolutely no political sentiment connected with anything I say. I feel that if I did not come and state what I know about pumice country I would not be doing my duty to the Dominion. I have farmed in this district now for some sixteen years. When I first went on to my holding I had to cut my way through tea-tree in order to build my shack. At the time I took up that country I, like many others, was of the opinion that it was necessary to have very large areas in order to make the farming pay. My experience has taught me this: that the country lends itself to intensive cultivation; and I am of the opinion that, in times to come, instead of farms being in, we will say, 200-acre lots as suggested by Mr. Martin, we will have quite small holdings, as in the Waikato—what we may call "one-man holdings" of from 50 to 60 acres. I am certain, from my experience, that the soil in this part of the country is equal to what was to be found in Hamilton and Cambridge thirty or forty years ago. I am of the opinion that the fineness of the soil has more to do with the immediate results that we get than what we might call a soil that has heart in it. Let me explain it this way: if I took a lump of pumice, crushed it with a hammer and then sieved it, the essence of all the ingredients would be the same. Some would be coarse like stones; others would be finer silts, and, in water, would settle down. From that finer soil we would get very satisfactory results. These soils are, I think, immature: they are new. The plant-food that is in them has not had time to develop, and in this class of country we are really dealing with immature soil. My experience has taught me that cultivation and aeration bring even what might be termed our poorest soils into productivity. There is country that would not carry a rabbit, as the saying goes—that would not carry a cow to 10 or 12 acres—in its natural state; but by cultivation and aeration of the soil the plant-food becomes available, and that apparently poor soil becomes a very rich soil indeed. I believe that our subsoils are probably just as rich as top soils. In fact, I break all my country in now 7 in. or 8 in. deep. That class of farming would, in some districts, be useless, as you know. I have grown great big swedes on what was apparently all poor clay land, or pumicy clay. The district I am in varies just a little from the Waitapu district, but I think only probably in the fineness of the soils. On country that in its natural state would grow nothing, after taking off a crop of swedes matures—that is the system I generally adopt—I find that, contrary