

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

Hon. E. RICHARDSON, Chairman.

TUESDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER, 1884.

Mr. J. McKERROW, Surveyor-General, examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] You are aware, I suppose, Mr. McKerrow, of the nature of the inquiry that you are now summoned upon?—Yes.
2. The Committee have summoned you as a witness with a view of obtaining from you, in the first place, all, or any, maps that you can produce to facilitate their inquiry into this matter?—Yes. I produce a map showing the land tenure of the North Island. [Map produced.]
3. Have you any large-sized map which can be hung up on the wall, showing the different proposed routes of the North Island Trunk Railway?—I can prepare one in a day or two. I may inform you, however, that, in anticipation of this inquiry, the department has been preparing a map for some time. This will be ready for certain this day week, showing all the routes, blocks of land, and land tenure, to a scale of eight miles to the inch. The map produced is on a scale of twenty-five miles to the inch; it is very small, but it is very good as an index map. We could give you one in the rough to-morrow on a larger scale—six miles to the inch.
4. Have you any personal knowledge of the country through which it is proposed to run these different lines of railway?—My knowledge is derived from the reports of the various surveyors. I have never actually been over the ground. I have had communications from Mr. Percy Smith, of Auckland, and Mr. Cussen, a gentleman who has been triangulating the King country, and he will be here on Thursday. Then there is Mr. Skeet, one of the surveyors of Taranaki, who has explored the country east of Stratford several times; he will be here to-morrow. Mr. Marchant, Chief Surveyor, of Wellington, who knows the country very well up to the Wellington boundary, is at your call now. And I hold in my hand a report by Mr. Cussen, describing the King country, which is part of the annual report of the Survey Department. But I do not think you need trouble yourselves with this just now, because it and other reports will be brought before you in a collected form by the Public Works Department.
5. Is that in the annual report coming before Parliament this session?—Yes.
6. Have you mentioned to us the names of all the officers from whom you received information?—I think I have. There is another gentleman I think of—Mr. Morgan Carkeek.
7. We have summoned him?—He is a very valuable and reliable man in a matter of this sort.
8. Can you give us any intimation of the value of the land; as to whether it is fit for agricultural settlement or otherwise?—I think I can.
9. From your own knowledge?—From derivative knowledge. I have no doubt at all it is fairly accurate, but possibly you may prefer to have it from the parties who really possess a personal knowledge, and I have already named these.
10. *Mr. Fergus.*] You know, generally, the nature of the land in the North Island?—Yes.
11. From a variety of sources?—Yes.
12. Can you tell us anything about the quality of the land through which what is known as the “central route” passes—the one from Marton to Te Kuiti?—At each end of the line—this, I must say, is derived information—the land is very good and suitable for settlement; but in the centre, after it passes Murimotu, and by Ruapehu, and generally about the head-waters of the Wanganui River, it passes through broken country—indeed, through a great deal of pumice country, a country which, possibly, would not be very suitable for settlement.
13. What do you consider the available quantity of land suitable for settlement on that route?—I have not thought of it in the way of giving definite areas. Before replying to that question I should like to scale the maps a little and give you something like a reliable estimate.
14. Then, I suppose, you would not be able just now to tell us what quantity of land, if any, there is in the hands of the Government?—There is actually none, or, at most, one or two small pieces. The map I have produced is valuable in that respect. It shows by colours the land that is Native and the Crown land. Both the Marton and Stratford routes, with minor exceptions, pass entirely through Native lands.
15. The question I wish to ask you is, whether the central line would open up the more available, that is cultivable, land, or the Stratford line?—The central route would open up more actually available arable land than the other one.
16. You mentioned that there is a certain distance of pumice country: how many miles of railway would there be through this pumice country?—I should not, myself, like to say the actual number of miles, but a very large proportion would be through pumice country.
17. Is the land on each side of the line, as far as your information goes, good level land or broken country?—It is very broken country—that is, the central portion of the railway.
18. What is the actual distance between Marton and Te Awamutu?—Two hundred and ten miles. That is what Mr. Rochfort gives.
19. Do you know the character of the country along the Stratford route?—Yes.
20. Any pumice land there?—Yes; it touches the verge of the pumice land, but not so much. The portion from Stratford inland—in fact, the whole way until you come to the Mokau country—is very rugged and broken indeed, and is all bush.
21. *Mr. Montgomery.*] You say your knowledge is merely derivative?—Yes.
22. And those from whom you got your knowledge will be examined before this Committee, I suppose?—Yes.
23. So that we shall get from them the actual facts?—Yes.
24. *Mr. Larnach.*] Have you heard the names of the witnesses that have been summoned by