

102. *The Chairman.*] In the sum total?—Yes. The total errors were only 16ft.

103. *Mr. Larnach.*] Of course, I presume, a great deal would depend on the weather as to the correctness?—Yes; but by having a check-barometer, following at twenty-four hours' distance, as was the case in this instance, the chances of error are very much reduced.

104. Then, I understand you to say that Ministers had ordered a levelled survey of the Stratford line?—Yes; but the weather turned out unfavourable; we did not like to send them out at once; it would have been comparatively useless to do so, as so much time would have been lost.

105. Did you say you looked upon the Mokau line as having been abandoned by the Government?—I cannot answer for the Government.

106. But you are acting under instructions?—I think I may say that the Government did not consider that the coast-line was one that ought to be considered, for the reasons I have stated.

107. *The Chairman.*] You stated that estimates have been made of these lines: are you prepared to give those estimates to the Committee?—I can give them, or the officers who prepared them can do so, whichever way may be thought best.

108. Who made the estimates?—Mr. Rochfort made his own estimate, and the other engineers made theirs, but they have been examined in the head office.

109. Who examined them?—I have done so, but not very minutely. The method on which they were made out was agreed upon beforehand. I think both Messrs. Holmes's and Williams's estimates might be taken as very fair, and that Mr. Rochfort's, when complete, will be found to be so likewise.

110. Will you be prepared to put before this Committee estimates of the cost of these lines that you can vouch for sufficiently to guide the Committee?—Yes, I think I may say that.

111. When will you be prepared with them?—In a few days' time; but in the reports as presented you will find the estimates, on which I should like to be examined afterwards. With regard to the central line you may take the estimates now being prepared as trustworthy.

Mr. J. W. A. MARCHANT, Chief Surveyor and Acting Commissioner of Crown Lands,
Wellington, examined.

112. *The Chairman.*] We have summoned you here, Mr. Marchant, with a view to getting any information you can give us in connection with the North Island Trunk Railway-line. Are you aware of the routes that have been proposed for this line?—I am acquainted with the southern extremity of the Rangitikei-Hautapu route.

113. That is known as the Marton route?—Yes.

114. What we call the central route, if you will kindly refer to it as such in your evidence?—Very good.

115. You are personally acquainted with that route?—I have walked over it, or rather over a portion of it.

116. To what extent do you know it, starting from Marton?—Up to the Waihora Creek, a branch of the Hautapu. I have been along the Rangitikei and the Hautapu fully as far as the Waihora.

117. *Mr. Fergus.*] How many miles is that?—About eighty-five miles.

118. *The Chairman.*] Practically you know the line from Marton to the Wangaehu River?—I know the country as far as Ruapehu.

119. What is the general nature of that land: is it fit for settlement: is any of it agricultural land?—Are you speaking of the whole route?

120. Of the portion which you know. I understand that you have travelled from Marton to Ruapehu?—Yes.

121. Well, what proportion of the land do you consider is fit for agriculture?—I may best answer that by describing the route. For ten miles out of Marton the land is agricultural.

122. How far on either side of the line?—From the Rangitikei to the Turakina. That is all settled country.

123. And with regard to the next ten miles?—The next ten miles pass through the Pourewa Valley, which is mostly under forest, fairly good land.

124. Is that flat land or hilly land?—It is a comparatively broad valley, with hills on each side.

125. Do you consider it fit for settlement?—Certainly it is. On the right hand or eastern side is the Rangatira Block, of about nineteen thousand acres, of fair average soil, bush country. On the western side is the Paraekaretu Block, which is settled upon, and cultivations have been effected upon it to a considerable extent. About twenty thousand acres of this block communicate naturally with the Pourewa. The next twenty-five miles of the line follow the Rangitikei Valley.

126. What is the nature of that land?—Fairly good land, consisting of flat terraces, with high hills, covered with mixed bush, running back to the westward. There is an important connecting point with the country to the eastward at Otara.

127. What extent of land has the Crown got there?—The Crown lands on that side aggregate to about one hundred and fifty thousand acres.

128. Sold or unsold?—Unsold. The natural outlet of half of it would be towards Feilding. The northern portion of the Otamakapua Block would, I think, be served by the proposed bridge at Otara. We have now reached the Hautapu Junction.

129. *Mr. Larnach.*] How far is that you have got now?—Forty-five miles. The line past there runs over flats, and occasionally over high cliffs and spurs which run out towards the river.

130. Good or bad land?—Fairly good land on the flats, but all bush country. From 45 to 60 miles the line passes along the Hautapu flats, and seems occasionally to cross the river. The flats consist of good soil, covered with mixed bush, with very steep hills to the southward. To the northward, across the Hautapu, is high hilly country (to the best of my belief), covered by mixed bush, also average-quality land.