

MEMORANDUM from Messrs. PALMERSON and SCOTT to Mr. J. W. A. MARCHANT.

Mr. J. W. A. Marchant.

Palmerston North, 15th August, 1881.

WE herewith send you the information requested in your memorandum of the 5th June, relative to the character of the soil, bush, topography, &c.

Otairi No. 1 consists of about 46,530 acres, of very broken, hilly country, the soil of which is fairly good, and suitable for pastoral purposes. It is heavily timbered, with the exception of about 2,000 acres bordering on the Turakina River, which is good fern and scrub land; there are also about 2,000 acres of good fern and scrub land lying along the Rangitikei River.

Otairi No. 2 consists of about 831 acres, of low, hilly country, bordering on the Mangapapa Stream. A considerable portion of it, having formerly been a Maori settlement, consists of open fern land, or is overgrown with light scrub; soil very good.

Otairi No. 3 consists of about 3,843 acres, of rich, undulating country, heavily timbered with rimu, kahikitea, matai, matai, &c.

Otairi No. 4 consists of 500 acres, is very broken, hilly country, and heavily timbered; the soil is fairly good, and suitable for pastoral purposes.

PALMERSON and SCOTT.

TUESDAY, 16TH SEPTEMBER, 1884.

Mr. JOHN SHEEHAN, examined.

163. *The Chairman.*] You are aware, Mr. Sheehan, that this Committee has been appointed to inquire into the relative merits of the different routes proposed for the North Island Trunk Railway?—Yes.

164. It has been suggested to the Committee that you are possessed of information which you would be willing to place at the disposal of the Committee on this subject. I should like to ask you whether you are personally acquainted with the country through which the respective lines would pass?—I am with the proposed Taupo-Napier route. I have been over that country frequently. I have also been over the central line to Rangitikei as far as Tokano, and a considerable distance on the other side, but not right through it, and from Marton northwards. On the Stratford line I have been close up to White Cliffs on the one side and to Te Kuiti on the other side, and from a point there I had a view of the country that I passed for a distance of about twenty-five miles.

165. Can you give us any idea as to the nature of the soil—its fitness, or otherwise, for agricultural settlement—on the Taupo-Napier line?—Shortly after the proposed Napier line leaves Te Awamutu—say, about ten or fifteen miles—the country begins to consist almost entirely of very light pumice soil. Travelling on to the crossing of the Waikato it becomes decidedly pumice, and from that down to the Tarawera is some of the worst country we have in the North Island.

166. *Mr. Fulton.*] A distance of how many miles?—I could not tell you. From Te Tapuaharuru to Tapuaharuru the country is of the most sterile character possible. It is all poor pumice country, especially so from Tapuaharuru down to Opepe. Knowing the country, I should be sorry to see any friend of mine taking it up to make a living out of it. Coming down from Opepe to Tarawera it is mostly pumice country. Some of the cuttings on the line of road show 80 feet of pumice. Down from Tarawera the country begins to improve, and from the Pohui down to Napier, a distance of about twenty-five miles, the land gradually improves, limestone formation comes in, and the country is good stock country. Certainly two-thirds of the line is poor country, and mostly composed of pumice.

167. *The Chairman.*] Now, take the next line. Will you tell us what you know about that?—The central line differs very materially from the eastern route in regard to the quality of the country. From the point where we cross the Waikato River it does pass through some pumice country, and, reaching Lake Taupo, it avoids pumice country, passing on the western side. It appears, from what I have seen of the country myself, the prevailing winds settle where the pumice should be. From Taupomoana the line passes through good country, but in places very much broken. My knowledge of the country terminates at about the 130th mile marked on the plan produced, coming from the Waikato side, and I take up again my knowledge of the country at 30 miles on the Wellington side, starting at Marton. The information I possess with regard to the balance of the country is very considerable, gained by my own agents whom I sent out when conducting land sales. I had reports furnished by them to me.

168. You brought us down on the map to the west side of Tongariro?—Well, coming south from that point the information I have is from men in my employment—surveyors—who say that the land is of very good quality but very much broken, down to a point thirty miles from Marton.

169. You wish to convey to the Committee that all the land between Tongariro and a point thirty miles from Marton is more or less of a broken nature?—Yes; the soil is of good quality, though.

170. Well, then, with regard to the thirty miles?—All that is good land.

171. Are you aware of how much is settled?—There is not much settled beyond the thirty miles, but the settlements are of this kind: large stations held by private persons, consisting of holdings of many thousand acres.

172. The Tarakaritu Block is settled?—Yes.

173. Now, with regard to the Stratford route, what information can you give us about that?—I have been on the northern side close up to Te Kuiti, that is, about twenty-five or thirty miles out. I have also been on the Hikurangi Range, which rises about 1,000 feet above the sea-level, and from that you get an extensive view of the valley leading out to the Mokau. The land there carries grass and clover. The Hikurangi Range gives you a good view of the country—a very level country;