

204. You told us before that you are not acquainted with the Te Awamutu end of this line?—No; I am not. I have been over the other side of the Taupo Lake as far as Tuhua.

205. Do you know anything about the gold-bearing country there?—Although I am an old digger I did not see any indications of gold.

206. Do you know anything of the Stratford line?—Nothing further than the township of Stratford itself. I have been there.

207. You stated, I believe, that you travelled between Napier and Taupo?—By coach.

208. Will you just state your opinion of that piece of country?—With regard to two-thirds of the distance from Taupo Lake towards Napier, if they gave me fifty thousand acres for nothing, to make my living out of it, I would not take it. The land is bad and worthless.

209. *Mr. Fergus.*] Talking of the country from Marton upwards, are there any indications of Maori settlement there as far as Ruapehu?—The traffic of the Natives, of course, was done by canoes, and they all lived upon the banks of the Rangitikei River. In 1850, at a settlement called Otara, there were between two and three hundred Natives settled there, and they were there for years and years. Above that—ten or eleven miles—there is another settlement of about eighty Natives. On the Hautapu, again, there are three different settlements, and on the Rangitikei there were several settlements.

210. According to the distance you have described, you have been up about eighty miles of that country?—Yes.

211. What would you say was the average width of land, say, good ploughable agricultural land?—The ploughable agricultural land would be in patches alongside the valleys and sidlings of the streams. As far as I could judge, I should say there are fully eight or ten miles of good land on both sides, and fully a third of that could be ploughed.

212. Of the country beyond the eighty miles you do not know much?—No; I have not been there, except that I have been in the Tuhua country.

213. How did you get there?—I went round from Taupo to Tuhua.

214. Of the country from Tuhua to Ruapehu you do not know much, I suppose?—No.

215. Is there any good marketable timber on the Marton line from what you saw between Marton and Ruapehu?—There are some of the finest clumps of totara and other timber I have seen from the Makohine to the clear land on the Hautapu.

216. *Mr. Montgomery.*] You say that for eighty miles the land is fit for the plough for eight or ten miles on either side?—Yes; one-third of it is.

217. Is the country timbered or open from twenty-three miles from Marton up to the eighty-mile point?—I think there is more open country than timber.

218. Contiguous to the railway route?—Yes; the railway would run right through it. All the way where it leaves the Hautapu until it joins the foot of Ruapehu it only goes through a small clump of timber.

219. What is the character of the soil on the open country?—It is very good soil. There is koromiko growing there.

220. Where koromiko is growing you call it open land?—Yes. There is also fern and flax in the valleys.

221. There is no grass?—Yes. On the plains it is tussocky grass.

222. Then, this open land is not timbered, but is generally covered with koromiko, fern, and flax?—Yes. We always take koromiko as an indication of the land being good. Koromiko scrub is preferred to manuka.

223. *Mr. Larnach.*] You say you know the land as far as Ruapehu. There is a good deal of land beyond there?—I have not been past there, but I have heard so.

224. Have you any idea of what distance of good land there is after leaving Ruapehu, northward?—I should say that the greater part of it is fairly good land; from there right across, all the way.

225. One hundred miles?—I should think so.

226. Have you any idea how much of the land along that line is held by the Crown, and how much by Natives and private individuals?—The first twenty-five miles from Marton is, of course, all in the hands of private individuals. Then, there is one block on the east side, of about sixteen or eighteen thousand acres, belonging to the Government—a portion of the Otairi Block. Then, there is another portion of the same block, of a similar size, belonging to private individuals. Then, all the land from there right out to the Murimotu is Native land.

227. On both sides of the line?—No; on one side—the west side. The land on the east side is a portion of the Otamakapua Block that comes up to the Kawatea.

228. To whom does it belong?—It belongs to the Crown. There are three blocks—104,000 acres in the Otamakapua; 29,000 acres in the Waitapu; and the Mangawhera Block, which was bought a good many years ago, about eighteen or twenty thousand acres; and from that again all the land is in the hands of Natives, excepting when you get up to the waterfall I have mentioned. Then, there is the land occupied by Messrs. Moorhouse and Studholme, leasehold; Morrin's leasehold; and Birch's, on the east side, a very large area, also leasehold.

229. In regard to any of the lands you speak of, are there, so far as you know, any provisions as to purchasing clauses?—You cannot get any purchasing clause with any Native land.

230. I understand, then, there is a good deal of land held by private individuals along that line?—Yes.

231. How long have you known that country?—I went to Taupo in 1866, and I have been there on two different occasions since then. I went up the Rangitikei as far as thirty-two miles in 1852, when there were a great many Natives living all up and down the river.