

WEDNESDAY, 17TH SEPTEMBER, 1884.

WAHANUI, examined.

232. *The Chairman.*] This Committee has been appointed to inquire into the feasibility of making a railway through this Island, and we have asked you to come here to-day to tell us what you know of the land through which the different lines would pass. Do you think there will be any difficulty in getting a line through the Tuhua country?—I can only speak of the land running from Tongariro to the White Cliffs northward. We had some discussion with Mr. Bryce about a railway through that land. He asked us if we would agree to a line being tried for a railway through that country, and we agreed on this understanding: that, when it was decided what line there was to be, our consent would be formally asked to the line being made. We wished that all the final arrangements connected with our lands should be settled first.

233. Have you been through this country since the surveyors went there and surveyed the lines?—I came along through the country as far as my own boundary, and then down the Ohura River.

233a. Have you been on the north part of the Stratford route since it was surveyed?—I have been on the Mokau line, not since it was surveyed, but previously. I have not been on the other part of the country. The piece from the junction of the central line to the junction of the Stratford and Mokau lines passes in front of our habitations.

234. Which of these lines goes through the best country for agricultural settlement?—The central line. To the westward of Taupo, on the Stratford line, there will have to be some tunnelling; the country is very broken. The fault of that line, however, is that it is longer than the others. The advantage of the Mokau line is its shortness.

235. Apart from a consideration of distance, which route do you think is the best for settlement?—The land to the junction of the central and Mokau lines is very good. Then on the Mokau line it gets very indifferent. The Mokau line is simply a coast-line.

236. Now, in regard to the central line?—The north end of the central line is very good until it comes to the westward of Taupo. The disadvantage of that part to the westward of Tongariro and Ruapehu is the pumice. I am not acquainted with the country beyond that.

237. Has any part of the country between Te Awamutu and the boundary you have described passed out of Native tenure?—None of the land comprised within my boundary has passed into the hands of Europeans. I excluded the land belonging to Europeans from my boundary.

238. *Mr. Fulton.*] Either by lease or sale?—No; there are no leases within the boundary; no portion of it has been sold. The land is good from mile 60 to 100 on the Stratford line, as marked on the map, and bad between 20 and 60. I have followed down the Stratford line as far as the Ohura River. I am familiar with the country from Te Awamutu down as far as the Ohura River. The country west of the river is very broken. From Te Awamutu down to Mokau River the land is all good, and is level.

239. *The Chairman.*] Which of the two lines would you and your friends prefer being made?—We have no choice in the matter. We did not ask for either of them to be made.

240. But the Government have surveyed both, and now we want to ascertain which is the best, and would also like to know which route the Maoris themselves would prefer?—I will now give my own opinion. The line I would prefer is the Stratford line. I have no authority whatever lower than the boundary I have described—from Tongariro to the White Cliffs. I could not give my consent for the line to be made southward of that boundary; the land belongs to the other tribes.

241. The white people wish to have a road to travel quickly through the country: do you not think the Maoris would like that?—We approve of it.

242. Why do you prefer the Stratford route?—Because the land is rich.

243. Better on that line than on the other?—Yes. A portion of the central line is pumice. I have been asked many questions since I have been in Wellington about arrangements concerning our land. It is my desire to have all these matters settled.

244. The Committee is only allowed to inquire into the question of a railway route, and the Native Minister and the Government must settle the other questions?—Quite right. I have no particular partiality for either of the routes being selected. I am quite content for any one of the routes to be adopted; but I am sure the Stratford line is the best, because it goes through good land. A good deal of the land that the central line runs through is pumice. The advantage of the central line, however, is that the country is much flatter, and it passes into the vicinity of a great quantity of totara, which would be available for sleepers. If our arrangements respecting this land were completed, I should be in a position to assist considerably in pointing out the best country.

245. You are sure that none of the land in your boundary has passed out of the Native tenure?—It all remains with the Natives. The Europeans have some leaseholds just about Tongariro.

246. Will you and your friends give every assistance towards making these lines, so as to get through quickly?—That is a question I cannot answer now, because I am here by myself. I should have to consult my people before replying.

247. But you have said you would all like to see a railway running through?—If I were to tell you now that I could consent and would help to make the line, I should be taking too much upon myself. Let me go back and consult with my people.

248. You yourself are favourable?—The little matters that I brought down in my calabash to have put right have not been attended to; and before replying to your question I would like to have my own matters put right. It will not do for me to give way all at once without some concessions on the other side. I think we had better both hold back. If the Government will only assist me in the object with which I have come to Wellington, I will do all in my power to assist the Government in carrying out this matter, and I will be very strong to give effect to the wishes of the Government in regard to this railway-making.