

310. You have not only surveyed this line, but to a great extent explored the country round about it?—Yes; I have been on most of the country on either side.

311. Will you give the Committee a general idea of the nature of the land through which this line passes, as to its fitness for settlement or otherwise?—That is given in my supplementary report.

Extract read, as follows:—

“*The First Section, Marton to Hautapu*, forty-three miles, is good land all through, and more than half is level, and, except some six or seven miles, all this section is bush, mostly valuable milling timber, and ballast can be got near. The only feature of importance is the Makohine Viaduct; but the following ideas should be carefully worked out before a detailed survey is made: First, whether a better line would not be got by following up the Porewa Valley some three miles further to Pokiore, and then crossing the watershed between the Rangitikei and Porewa. Second, whether it would not be better to follow up the Makohine, and avoid the necessity for the viaduct. Third, whether a shorter line could be got up the Makohine, to fall in to present line at Three-log Creek or Hautapu; and whether the bends caused by the Hautapu could not be shortened.”

312. You say it is good land all through. From what point of view?—Chiefly good agricultural land, almost without exception. And there is also a large extent of country which would feed into that, which is also good.

313. Do you mean to say it is good agricultural country as it now stands; or is it heavily bushed, and will it only be agricultural land when the bush is taken off it?—It is heavily bushed, and the bush would have to be taken off it. The bush is of splendid quality, and would no doubt pay for the removal.

314. And the land would be good agricultural land afterwards?—Yes.

315. What is the tenure of the land?—Most of the land is in the hands of Natives beyond the twenty-third mile, but part is under treaty with the Government to purchase or lease, I do not know which.

316. *Mr. Larnach*: None of the land is in private hands?—None above that point.

317. *The Chairman*: Then, in your supplementary report, you say: “*The Second Section, Turangarere to Hautapu*, was surveyed the reverse way; but, continuing my description forwards, the land is very good all through, and, except some ten miles, is all bush; the timber is good milling timber. Ballast can be got at several places, and plenty will doubtless be opened out in the cuttings. In the open part of this section limestone outcrops occur in many places some fifty feet above the general flat of the valley, and will no doubt be useful in cheapening cost of culverts, &c. Turangarere is the point from which a communication would be established with the inland Patea, which is a very extensive block of country of splendid character, and is on the road to Napier from Murimotu.” You say that this is all good land?—Yes.

318. It is all bush?—Except some ten miles.

319. What is the length of that section?—That section is twenty-six miles.

320. It is good land when cleared of timber?—Yes; and the open land is very good as a rule.

321. Then, for ten miles it is open land?—Yes.

322. And good agricultural land?—There is a large portion of hill about it; but the hills are very low.

323. Would you describe the hills as downs, or really steep hills?—I would describe them as downs.

324. Is it land that you could plough; or is it too steep to plough?—I am sure you could plough the most of it.

325. *Mr. Larnach*.] The land is good in itself?—Very good in itself.

326. *The Chairman*.] Continuing your report, you say,—

“*The Third Section, Turangarere to Waimarino*, was surveyed forwards, and for the first seven miles is tolerably good open land, grass in the valleys and on hill-sides; tops of hills generally good totara bush; the next thirteen miles the land is open, and, except some four or five miles in the Waitangi Valley, is poor, with pumice sand; but limestone exists, outcropping, as in the last section, all through at a level of about fifty feet above the surrounding flat. This last is the Murimotu Plain, leased as sheep country. Good bricks have been made in the neighbourhood; and the pumice sand and local limestone are said to produce mortar of a remarkably good character.

“After this there are about twelve miles of level forest country, timber and soil both good, and to west of the line about 100,000 acres of similar land: still further west, between this and the Wanganui River, there is an area of 100,000 acres of broken country (papa rock and marl), but the land is generally of good quality, and the timber chiefly taua. On the east side of the line hereabouts the country rises, forming a level table-land, moderately good, but not by any means to be compared with the lower flat. The timber on this table-land is largely mixed with kaikowhaka, a poor sort of cedar, only fit for cabinetmakers' work. This table-land ends at the flanks of Ruapehu, from which mountain spurs run down into it.”

—I should like to say that at the beginning of this section Turangarere has a connection with the inland Patea country, an immense district, which can nearly all be called agricultural land. Drays have come from Napier within nine miles of that point. It is a splendid block of country.

327. *Mr. Larnach*.] Is it in the hands of the Natives?—Yes; but part of it is leased to Messrs. Birch.

328. *The Chairman*.] What is the length of the third section?—Forty-three miles.

329. Have you anything to say about the third section beyond what is in the report?—No. The Murimotu Plain is very poor; but directly you go to the forest country beyond, which is of very considerable extent, the land is very good. In this there are some little isolated limestone hills I