

THURSDAY, 18TH SEPTEMBER, 1884.

Mr. JOHN ROCHFORD, Surveyor and Engineer, further examined.

368. *The Chairman.*] You gave a lot of information yesterday about the nature of the land you had seen in your explorations, and you were good enough to state that you would prepare a classified return of the land.—Yes. I have been engaged in its preparation since I gave my evidence yesterday, but I have not yet had time to complete it. It will, however, be ready by to-morrow.

369. *Mr. Larnach.*] I understood you to say there was a good deal of good land on the central line?—Yes.

370. Fit for agriculture?—Decidedly.

371. Have you ever been on the Taieri Plains, in the South?—No, I have not. I know the Canterbury District very well, but not the Taieri.

372. Do you know anything of the Stratford or western route?—No, except just at the beginning.

373. In your cross-surveys from the central line how near did you go toward the Stratford line?—I have been to the Wanganui River in a good many places.

374. What distance would that be from the Stratford line?—The average distance would be about fifteen miles.

375. About half-way?—(After measuring on the map)—About eleven miles.

376. As you travelled in the direction of the western line from the central line what was the nature of the country? Would you say the country was good country the further you went in the direction of the Stratford line?—I did not cross the Wanganui River.

377. But in going westward from the central line, was the country good—going from one line to the other?—Yes.

378. Does it promise to be good land for settlement?—Yes. There is a considerable amount of flat land on the line, and behind that a belt of about ten miles of papa country.

379. And that promises to be good country?—Yes.

380. It is all in the direction of the western line?—Yes.

381. So that the country, leaving the central line behind, promises to be good country?—Yes, all good country to the Wanganui River.

382. *Mr. Montgomery.*] You spoke yesterday of the Canterbury Plains: have you ever been down at Southbridge?—Yes; but the question that was asked me yesterday related principally to the land on the main line on the Canterbury Plains.

383. You mean along the railway route?—Yes.

384. You simply referred to the land contiguous to the Canterbury line—you only know the land on the Canterbury Plains by going along the railway line?—Oh, yes; I think I have been nearly all over it. I have been all over it, engaged in the survey.

385. Do you say the land there is as good as this land?—Yes.

386. As Rangiora and Kaiapoi?—Yes. I do not think you could find land that is better than the greater bulk of this is.

387. *Mr. Fulton.*] Would the country, generally, through which this central route proposes to go, be better than along the line which connects North Canterbury with Cook Strait by way of Tophouse and Wairau Valley?—Vastly better.

388. Would the engineering difficulties be anything like equal to those?—No, they would not; the Wairau Gorge is a very costly obstacle, and so is the saddle.

389. What difference per mile would you think there would be in the cost of construction?—Roughly, about £1,000 per mile.

390. You made a survey of that line?—Yes. There are many more advantages connected with the Marton line. There is timber, and the line would open up far better country.

391. *Mr. White.*] I understand that, when you refer to the quality of the land, you mean the land after the bush is taken off?—I don't suppose it would be altered.

392. But the bush has first to be removed?—Yes; but that does not refer to all of it. A portion of the country is open and good.

393. But the greater portion is bush or scrub?—Yes. I am preparing a rather full statement on that point.