

54,000 acres within the same radius, and to which the same description would apply; both are in limestone country; the open land is fern, koromiko, and grass, &c.. This is called the Inner Patea country, and adjoining the last-described land there is a still larger area of good open limestone country that would make use of the railway. Messrs. Birch and Moorhouse and Co. hold 164,000 acres under Native lease. This land consists of long valleys and low downs generally covered with grass, one-third would be arable and the remainder good pastoral land.

From 86½ to 98 miles the land is mostly flat bush, the two nearest miles to Murimotu have a large admixture of birch, but the land is good. Beyond, the bush is kahikatea, matai, taua, maire, and totara; there are several small clearings, grass and fern, and the land is generally of good quality. On the west side, within ten miles of the line, there is an area of 107,000 acres, of which about one hundred thousand acres are flat. Between this and the Wanganui River there is a belt of low broken country, papa and limestone rock, with taua bush, and in places heavier timber; the land is generally good. Half of this area would be served by the railway and half by the Wanganui River. On the east of the line, within five miles, there are 16,000 acres, of which one-fourth would be fair arable land and the rest good pastoral; a part of this (the Rangitaua Block) is Crown land.

From 98 to 107 miles the line runs on a higher table-land, through which the rivers run with high banks, necessitating the viaducts shown in the diagram. This land is not of such good quality as the lower flat; the timber is rimu, hinau, maire, matai, and birch, largely mixed with kaiko-whaka; there are about twelve thousand acres of table-land to the east of the line, one-fourth of which would be fair arable land, and sixty-seven thousand acres on the west, one-fourth of which would likewise be good arable land. Still further west, towards the Wanganui River, about thirty-five thousand acres of land would make use of the railway. Down the Manganui-a-te-ao there are many small Native settlements and cultivations where kumeras, taro, and wheat are grown. On the river-sides there are generally fern flats through which the river runs, with very high banks; the principal rock is shell limestone; some of the land is very good. The bush generally is light taua. The Manganui-a-te-ao offers a good means for road communication with the Wanganui River.

From 107 to 113 miles (Waimarino) the country is open tussock grass and poor land; to the north-east there is a run of open and nearly-flat country, past Lake Roto Aira to Taupo; this is very poor country, held under Native lease as a sheep-run. There are some few patches of moderately-good country, where the Natives generally are located and have cultivations, but, if this railway should be made, Waimarino will be an important junction. On the east of the line there are about thirty-two thousand acres fit for pastoral purposes.

From 113 to 120 miles the line runs near the Piopiotea. Several miles are along high terrace bush land of good quality; the timber for the first two or three miles is light, but after that it is marketable, consisting of matai, kahikatea, rimu, taua, maire, and some totara. There would be 38,000 acres available on the west, and 18,000 acres on the east, of which a third would be good arable, and remainder good pastoral land.

From 120 to 131 miles it is bush land, of good quality; timber similar to last, except that the last three or four miles are chiefly large totara trees of great length without branching. In this length of line there would be on the west 42,000 acres, of which one-third would be arable, and 63,000 to the east, of similar character, one-third would be good arable and remainder good pastoral land.

From near 131 miles a Native horse-track goes by Ruamata to Taupo; the track is bad, but the land along it is very good soil. A better road can be got up the Wanganui River. From a little lower down another Native track goes to Taupo by way of the Puketapu and Pungapunga River. The country along this line shows pumice in places, and is not so good for land as the Ruamata track, but there are some good patches of totara in some of the valleys. Up the Pungapunga is where the Natives believe gold to exist. I saw some quartz and slate, but the indications are not good. There are two settlements and cultivations up the river.

From 131 to 137½ miles (Taumaranui) to the south of the line, 48,000 acres of land would be available; it is chiefly open, what bush there is is totara. The soil is fairly good, one-half would be arable and the remainder good pastoral land. There is some drift pumice in the soil, but I do not consider it injured by it. To the north of the line there are 28,000 acres of patchy land, one-third of which would be arable, part is very good and part pumice.

From 137½ to 160 miles (Waimiha) the country is generally open, with considerable fern flats all along the Ongarue River, with a good many Native villages and cultivations. The land is generally covered with heavy fern, but it is patchy, part being very good, and part largely mixed with pumice sand; the hills are often bush on top, and generally good soil. On the west and south of the line there are two blocks of 109,000 and 61,000 acres accessible to the railway, one-third would be arable and remainder good pastoral land. On the east there would be 75,000 acres, which include the low-wooded country at the back called Tuhua, said by the Natives to be good country. I have not been on much of it, but have looked over it from several points; I should estimate one-third of it as arable. There is some good land and Native settlements up the Taringamutu, and a large amount of totara.

All the country down the Wanganui, at least as far as Maraekowai, or the confluence of the Ohura and Wanganui, would be served by the central route line. The Ohura offers a road communication through the centre, connecting with the line at 154 miles, where the Native track is from Mokau. All upper good land of the Mokau is also accessible. I consider the central route would embrace all the country along the western route to within sixty-two miles of Stratford.

From 160 to 166 miles on the west there are 16,000 acres of low bush hill country, with strong fern in the valleys. Most of the bush land is very good, and the timber marketable; about one-fourth would be arable. On the east there are 43,000 acres of land, a third of which up the Waimiha and Ongarue is open flat country and very poor; the remainder is fair pastoral land, with one-fourth arable.