

466. The Committee has been given to understand that you have been employed in surveying one of the proposed lines?—Yes; the line from Stratford to Te Awamutu, through the Upper Mokau.

467. In conjunction with Mr. Holmes?—No; originally I went by myself. It was only over the upper part of the line that I went with Mr. Holmes.

468. Between Mokau and Te Awamutu?—Yes; Mr. Holmes was with me over that, but not between Stratford and Tangarakau.

469. Starting from Stratford, would you describe the nature of the country through which this line passes?—From Stratford it passes through good country, with rimu and white pine-bush for about thirteen miles, and good land towards the general course of the Patea River. Then the country changes, and on coming up the branches of the Patea we crossed a high broken range, and descended into a branch of the Patea called Mangaotuku. There the land is good again. Then it becomes somewhat swampy, with black-birch ranges on eastern side. The black-birch range was parallel with the line from the 23rd mile to the 30th. The range to the eastward is black birch. The valley, although narrow, is good soil.

470. What is the average width of the valley?—Not more than 20 chains in some parts, and it runs down to 5 chains.

471. What is the height of the hills on the other side?—About 600ft.; the saddles about 400ft. Of course, that would not be above sea-level.

472. From the bottom of the valley?—Yes.

473. After leaving the 30th mile, what is the nature of the country?—The gullies are good, and they open out to a width of about 10 chains in the Makahu. Between 30 and 40 miles it is exceedingly rough; that is the main watershed between the Patea and Wanganui Rivers.

474. Rough on both sides?—Yes.

475. Is the soil good?—Only in the gullies.

476. And what is the width of the gullies?—About 3 or 4 chains.

477. Are the hills timbered with black birch?—On the tops, and some on the slopes.

478. From 40 miles to 45 miles, what is the character of the country?—It is pretty good in the valleys. The hills are covered with stunted bush and manuka scrub, and the country all broken. The ranges rise to 1,000 feet above the valley.

479. From 45 miles to 50?—It is comparatively good, consisting in the first part of little valleys covered with manuka scrub, and then it comes to very bad land again.

480. From 50 to 55 miles?—It is a mere gorge, with steep hills on both sides, but there is a little flat of about a chain or so where the railway could be made along. Some of the spurs are so steep that a man could not walk up them.

481. From 55 miles to 60?—It is bad to about the 58th mile: some of the worst country I have seen in New Zealand.

482. *Mr. Larnach.*] Do you mean the worst character of land?—Yes, black birch; precipices on both sides, no soil, and the ranges rising about 900ft. up the gorge.

483. *The Chairman.*] From 58 to 60 miles?—It is up into a saddle. The surrounding country is still bad.

484. Is there any good land there?—No; the land continues the same until the 63rd mile.

485. On both sides of the line?—Yes.

486. Can you tell us the general nature of the country from mile 63 to about 70?—It is white-pine bush in the low valleys, with low hills, and the land gets better. There is tawa bush along the banks of the streams, showing better soil.

487. Is the land broken there?—Yes, along the ranges. From 68 to 70 miles is all good, being a valley of about half a mile in width. From 70 to 75 the line passes through a low saddle into the Ohura River?—The Mangaroa Valley runs up to the north-west some five miles; the hills getting bad, and running into high and steep ranges.

488. What is the average width of the flats?—About 20 chains, with clumps of white pine and tawa bush, and good soil.

489. And what of the ranges?—Tawa part of the way, and birch on the top. On the eastern side it is open country. From about 72 to 78 miles is open country, but the soil is poor, and covered with fern and birch scrub in places. From there up to 80 miles we go up a branch of the Okura, called Waikaka. The land is flat here, about 10 or 15 chains wide, and there are some small gullies running in from the eastward, with good land about 10 chains wide, and high spurs between. From 82 to 85 miles it becomes a mere gorge right up to the saddle. At the 85th mile there is a waterfall with a drop of 250 feet. From mile 85 there is an easy rise up to the saddle at the 87th mile, through open fern country.

490. What is the country on both sides of the line there?—Fern and scrub. The land gets better near the saddle.

491. And from the saddle at 87?—Down to about 90 is a rough hillside, and from there to 95 is easy open fern and swampy country, the soil getting better.

492. That is the general country on both sides?—Yes.

493. How far to the east and west of the line?—Two or three miles on both sides. Generally the land is improving.

494. From 95 onwards?—At 97 we come on to the limestone country, and follow up the Mokau River; very good country, grazing land, with better country to the westward.

495. And what to the eastward?—The spurs are rather steep, running up to the bush ranges.

496. Beyond the 100th mile?—It is still good open country, with limestone, up to 105; light soil covered with fern, and the flats there could be ploughed. On the east there is a rather high range; good soil.

497. And beyond that?—It still keeps on good soil until we get to the saddle at the 110th mile.