

891. *The Chairman.*] Continuing the route from 30 miles?—From 30 miles up to 40, the country is very rough; principally black birch, valleys good but narrow.

892. The country on both sides of the line is poor?—Yes; the watershed between the Patea and Wanganui Rivers on one side, and Waitara watershed on the other side.

893. And you practically go over the ridge between the two?—Yes.

894. Is the line much curved there?—No.

895. What curves would there be, do you think?—You could get 10 or 12 chains radius anywhere.

896. We have now got as far as 40 miles. Now, as to the other ten miles?—The other ten lie to the right of the line, and comprise good land; the hills are not very high.

897. That is to the eastward of the line?—Yes. To the westward it is rough.

898. You say you saw no ballast there. Did you see any signs of minerals on that part of the line?—No.

899. Any coal?—No.

900. No coal on the Tangarakau?—I only went one mile on the Tangarakau. The country in front looked very rough indeed. I afterwards walked through from 78 miles to the end.

901. Taking the line generally, how far on either side of the line have you been in respect to the 50 miles you have been describing?—I have been down to the coast on the west side, and from three to five miles on the eastern side.

902. *Mr. W. White.*] What price per mile do you reckon for the permanent-way?—About £3,000 per mile for permanent-way, rolling-stock, and stations.

903. About what price per yard would the ballast be reckoned in that £3,000 per mile?—I could not say exactly now; probably 3s. or 4s.

904. Do you think it could be done for that?—Yes.

905. Where do you expect to get the ballast from?—Probably it might be found along the line on going through with it. I have known that to be the case before in many places.

906. Could these grades be improved at all?—Yes.

907. To what extent?—They could be made a good deal better, but at a very much greater expense.

908. You think it would not pay to alter them, then?—I could not say; it would require a detailed survey through to enable one to speak definitely on that point.

909. What is the value of the land between 25 miles and 50 miles: is it of any good?—From 30 to 40 miles is very bad and rough; from 40 to 50 on the eastern side is pretty good—fair grazing land.

910. Would you call 30 to 40 very inferior?—Yes; rough.

911. Did you see any kind of timber, except black birch?—Yes; rimu in the valleys.

912. But any timber fit for bridging?—Not much.

913. So it would all have to be taken from some other place?—Yes.

914. Was that taken into consideration in the estimate, or have you taken the average according to lines similarly situated as to ballast and timber?—Yes; in similar places for timber.

915. But as to ballast?—Not as to ballast.

916. *Mr. Montgomery.*] You say you saw the land on each side of the line from 3 to 5 miles?—Yes.

917. Sufficiently well to enable you to form an estimate of its quality and value?—Yes.

918. You did not go beyond that?—On the western side I have been down to the coast, a distance of twenty or thirty miles, in two or three places.

919. Will this railway be of value to that land more to the westward?—Not a great portion of it; not so much between 30 and 50 miles.

920. Then, up to 30 miles it will serve land to the westward of the line that is of good value?—I think so.

921. Then, as to that portion between 12½ and 30 miles to the westward, is that capable of carrying population?—It is good grazing land.

922. Would it carry population?—Yes, I think so.

923. It is suitable for settlement?—Yes.

924. And the railway would benefit that land?—Yes.

925. Have you been over any part of the central line?—No.

926. You have no knowledge of the quantity of land there, so as to form a comparison?—None whatever.

927. Between 30 and 40 miles, which you spoke of as being black-birch hills, I suppose this is of comparatively little value on account of the quality of the soil?—The quality of the soil and the steepness of the hills.

928. And you say that the land from 40 to 50 miles is of very good quality?—Yes.

929. How far to the eastward?—About two or three miles.

930. And to the eastward of that again?—I could not speak as to that,

931. It may be good or it may be bad?—Yes.

932. In fact, you have only explored the country just along the line a bit?—To the westward I have been through as far as the coast.

933. Was your business to find the best line for the railway, or to ascertain the quality of the soil?—Principally to find the best line for the railway.

934. Irrespective of the quality of the soil?—I had nothing to do with that.

935. *Mr. Fulton.*] Can you tell the Committee what the geological formation is through the 50 miles you have described?—The first 12½ is volcanic; of the remainder the subsoil is papa rock, with clay in the valleys, and alluvial.

936. You said, in answer to the Chairman, that you took other barometrical readings beside those indicated on the sectional survey?—Yes,