

973. And the rest all bush?—The greater portion of it.

974. And only fit for pastoral purposes after being cleared?—Yes.

975. You say you are acquainted with the country to the westward of Lake Taupo. Will you tell us what the nature of that country is from a settlement point of view?—It consists of a series of valleys, not of any great width, and divided by high ranges, some of which have plateaus on top, the plateaus being generally very good soil. Some of the valleys are very fair soil, and some indifferent. The character of the soil changes very rapidly.

976. Would you kindly say for about what length north and south of the country you are now alluding to?—From the 145th mile on the map to the 160th; that is, on the central line.

977. And is that good soil, fit for settlement purposes?—Passably so. The character of the soil varies so rapidly, that it would not be right to say that the whole of it is suitable for settlement, but a very large proportion of it is.

978. Do you know of any minerals in that district?—Not immediately there, but I know that coal has been found in other parts.

979. In what other parts?—On the Tangarakau.

980. You say you know the southern portion of the central line?—Yes.

981. From Murimotu?—From Murimotu downwards to Marton.

982. Can you give us, generally, an idea of the class of that land?—The soil is good—I should say nearly the whole of the soil is good from Marton to Murimotu, but at the same time it is a very broken country. It could only be classed as pastoral after being cleared and set down in grass. There are, of course, one or two small valleys in it which are suitable for agriculture, but the agricultural land is limited as far as our knowledge goes.

983. In speaking of agricultural land here, are you speaking of it as fit for agriculture now, or when the bush is cleared?—When cleared.

984. Is it all bush?—As far as I know, with the exception of one place, it is all bush.

985. I think you said that the only portion you knew of the Stratford line was a short distance out of Stratford?—Yes.

986. What distance do you know?—Very little indeed. I have never been along the line there; it is more a general knowledge of the surrounding country that I mean.

987. You say you have been up to the Mokau?—I have.

988. You are aware that the upper portion of the Stratford line goes through the head-waters of the Mokau?—Yes.

989. What do you know of the northern thirty miles of the Stratford line?—I have been through the country and I do know something about it. I know that the character of the soil is very good indeed; that is, quite first class as to soil. There are some valleys in it which would be agricultural, and there is a further amount of good open and forest land too, which we should call pastoral land after being cleared.

990. Is the whole of that fit for settlement?—Yes, the whole of it.

991. What is the length of the land on this line that you are now describing?—Twenty-five miles of the northern end of the Stratford line.

992. The best way to describe that locality, then, is the country at the head of the Mokau?—Yes, that is it.

993. To the point that you have just named, I gather that the land from Te Awamutu is practically all good for settlement, and is all good land either before it is cleared or after it is cleared?—Yes.

994. And the greater portion of it is only pastoral land after it is cleared?—Quite so; that is, as far as my personal knowledge goes, the whole of the country from Te Awamutu to a little south of the head of the Mokau is good land, capable of settlement.

995. Is there any country on the coast-line fit for settlement?—From Waitara to the White Cliffs is a settled country. After getting towards the north you come into precipitous mountainous country up to the head of the Mokau.

996. Do you know the nature of the country at all between the coast and the Stratford lines?—No, I do not; my knowledge of that is simply from seeing it at a distance. I know that it is exceedingly broken.

997. Now, to go to the eastern line, what is the general nature of the country?—Leaving Te Awamutu until you come near to the Waikato River, you run through the same kind of country as I have described along the first northern portion of the central line. After that you get into the pumice country.

998. How far does the pumice country run?—It would run up to and across the Mohaka. Some parts of it are better than others.

999. From the Mohaka to Napier, what is the class of country?—Going down the Mohaka River, or the Ripia, the soil is good enough, but it is a terribly-broken country—a mass of gorges—until you come out on the Napier side; then there is probably fifteen or twenty miles of pumice country, and after that there is very good limestone country, a good deal of which is in grass at the present time.

1000. It is reported to the Committee by several witnesses that there is a considerable tract of pumice country on the central route?—I did not see any of that, but I know that there is some.

1001. You cannot speak of it from your own knowledge?—No.

1002. *Mr. Montgomery.* Between 140 and 160 miles west of Lake Taupo, it is fit for settlement in parts?—Yes.

1003. Is some of it pumice country?—Some of it is. That is why I say “in parts.” On some of the flats there is pumice.

1004. What parts are suitable for settlement?—The hilly country would be the better. At the same time some of the flats are quite good.