

1005. Is it arable land?—It would be after the bush or fern which grows upon the open country was cleared.

1006. In speaking of arable land, do you mean bush land after being stumped, or fern land?—I refer to both.

1007. What is the nature of the soil?—It is a dark loam.

1008. What is the geological formation?—The geological formation there is slate.

1009. The land for twenty-five miles to the junction of the two proposed routes is very good?—Yes; very good.

1010. Is that after the land has been cleared?—Always. It “goes without saying,” in the Provincial District of Auckland, that the land requires to be cleared. Some of it is bush and some of it is open. The country I refer to—the twenty-five miles—is open.

1011. Is that on the Stratford route?—It is the Stratford route that I am referring to—that which crosses the head of the Mokau.

1012. *Mr. Larnach.*] Referring to the 350,000 acres of good country, either the central or western route would have the advantage of that?—Quite so.

1013. Do you know, of your own knowledge, whether any of the country is auriferous?—No; merely by hearsay. There is very good evidence of that being the case.

1014. To which part of the country do you refer?—The Tuhua country on the central line.

1015. It is rather westward of the central line?—The proposed line comes very close to the spot where the reported gold discovery is.

Major ROBERT PARRIS, examined.

1016. *The Chairman.*] You have been employed by the Government for several years?—For twenty-five years.

1017. In what capacity?—As Land Purchase Commissioner and Assistant Secretary.

1018. And during that time you have been more or less engaged in travelling about the central and westward part of the North Island?—I have travelled very little on what is now talked of as the line of railway, but I know the whole country from Waikato to Mokau and from Stratford to the Tahoraparoa Ranges. I know from Stratford up to 50 miles, in short.

1019. Do you know anything of the central line at all?—I do not.

1020. Can you tell us what is the general nature of the country from Stratford, as far as you know it?—A fine country for settlement; very fine.

1021. Is it bush land?—It is bush land, with spots of open land.

1022. Of what extent?—Not large ones.

1023. Can you give us any idea of the proportion of open land?—I should not like to commit myself to any specific quantity at all. It is not, however, a large quantity. The places were cleared by the Natives years ago, and are now grown over with ferns.

1024. What is generally the nature of the soil?—Very good indeed, dark alluvial soil.

1025. Is the land much broken?—Very little indeed in that part.

1026. You are speaking now of the whole fifty miles?—Yes.

1027. Is the timber fit for market?—There is red pine, kaikewakaro, and some totara, but pine is the principal.

1028. Are there any Maori settlements along that line now?—Not along there; they are nearer the Waitara River.

1029. Are there any minerals in that part of the country?—Not in that part; the reported mineral country is beyond.

1030. Can you give us a description of the land between the Stratford line and the coast?—That is all acquired by the Government now.

1031. How far east and west of the line, as laid down on the map, does your description of the land apply to?—Very little beyond the proposed line of railway to the east or south-east of it. I have never been across that part of it. That would be to the Wanganui River.

1032. Your remarks apply to the westward, then?—To the westward and north-west.

1033. And to what distance from the line?—All through to the coast.

1034. How is the bulk of that land held? On the map produced there are various patches of colours, and we understand that wherever a patch has been left white the land is absolutely in the hands of the Government. Outside that white is there any land under negotiation; in other words, are you aware of any land having passed through the Court, and the title cleared, to be dealt with by the Maoris?—The principal part outside the confiscation-line is in the hands of Maoris.

1035. But has any of the land outside the white passed through the Court, and in such a position that the Maoris can sell it to anybody?—Several small blocks have passed through the Court.

1036. How far does the line coming out of Stratford run through private property?—I could not tell you the exact distances. It runs through on one side of it.

1037. For how many miles?—I really could not say how many miles.

1038. Could you say within three or five miles? Are there ten miles of it?—I do not think there is so much.

1039. Less than ten miles then?—Yes, I think so.

1040. Do you know of any blocks of lands along that line that are in a position to be dealt with, and the title of which can be got from the Maoris?—Yes, with the usual difficulties, the land is open to be dealt with.

1041. But has any of it passed through the Court?—None beyond the few small blocks I have referred to.

1042. *Mr. Montgomery.*] You say you do not know much of the land to the east of that line,