

but to the west you know it very well: what is the quality of the land that would be served by the line to the west?—I should think it is very good for settlement. Some of it is broken, also undulating, and some of it is level, but the greater part is occupied by settlers.

1043. For how far up the line from Stratford?—Well, the settlement is after crossing the Waitara River, just beyond Stratford.

1044. How far is that from Stratford? How far is the settlement from Stratford that would be served by the railway?—I believe that the whole of the land is taken up between Waitara River and Stratford.

1045. And settled upon?—I do not say it is all settled upon, but it is taken up.

1046. How far is that about, in miles, to the westward of the Stratford-Te Awamutu line? I understood you to say that the land is fit for settlement?—The land as far as the Tahoraparoa Ranges is very fair for settlement. That is about fifty-one miles.

1047. You would call it good land?—Yes; there is some of it broken as you get towards the River.

1048. *Mr. Fulton.*] Are you aware of any negotiations that have been begun for the purchase of the land from the Natives?—No further than those to which I have alluded.

1049. None recently?—No.

1050. I say "begun," I do not mean completed?—I do not know of any begun except what I have alluded to.

1051. *Mr. Larnach.*] Has any land passed through within the last year?—They were finished during the past year, but have been under negotiations for the past four or five years.

1052. What size of blocks?—One 16,000 acres, another 9,000 or 10,000 acres, and another 120,000 acres.

1053. Have these passed into the hands of Europeans?—Yes.

1054. Private individuals or companies?—Where it was a company it consisted of three or four Europeans.

1055. To the westward of the Stratford line is good land?—It is.

1056. Do you not know anything of the eastward of the Stratford line?—Only by repute.

1057. You have not been on it?—I have not.

MONDAY, 22ND SEPTEMBER, 1884.

Captain H. W. NORTHCROFT, Resident Magistrate, Waikato, examined.

1058. *The Chairman.*] It has been intimated to the Committee that you have traversed a good deal of the country to the south of Te Awamutu, in the direction in which it is proposed to construct a main trunk line of railway. Would you kindly tell the Committee what extent of that country you have traversed?—I have travelled from Te Awamutu to the Mokau on the coast, the portion near the Tuhua.

1059. When was it that you traversed that country?—In March, 1875. I lived in the Waikato district for some time, and went across to Taranaki. I crossed from Te Awamutu, and came down the Mokau River.

1060. Then, you are pretty well acquainted with all that country from Te Awamutu down to Mokau on the coast?—Yes.

1061. And from Te Awamutu through the Tuhua country?—I do not know it from the western side; I know it from the Taupo side. There is a piece between the two I do not know.

1062. Would you describe it as fit for settlement?—No; there are portions on some of the valleys that might be called agricultural, and portions that would do for pastoral, but the great quantity of land is very indifferent.

1063. What general description would you give to the land?—I suppose it might do in instances for large runs; but I do not think anybody could make anything of it under 2,000 or 3,000 acres.

1064. Would you call it pastoral country?—You might call it pastoral country, but some of it, I think, would not carry sheep. It is much of the same nature as the Taupo country, where I lived some considerable time; that was, only two or three inches of soil in some places. There is a crust, and if you break the crust you lose the whole of the soil. We lost it by ploughing it. I dare say if it were disc-harrowed you might get grass to grow.

1065. You have not seen any of that sort of country tried to be put down in grass?—I saw some in Taupo. I think it was in Sir Julius Vogel's time—1872. He sent a lot of grass to be tried there, but it was a failure.

1066. How does the surface-sowing answer?—It does not do. There is a moss comes up with the wi grass, and the English grass dies.

1067. Then, there is no other portion to the southward of mile 100 on the map that you know on that central route?—No. Of course there are valleys here and there, perhaps, where you could get a nice little farm.

1068. Is the bush land there good?—Yes; it would take grass.

1069. But is the bush itself good?—It is all the same formation of country. The trees do not make a tap in any of that country. Even the red and white pine trees, and many other sorts that usually make tap-roots, the roots run along the surface, and do not go into the pumice drift.

1070. But is the timber good marketable timber, that is what I mean?—Yes; some of it is very valuable timber.

1071. Is it heavy bush land?—Some of the timber is heavy.

1072. Now, with regard to the Stratford line?—So far as I have gone on that line, the land is all good country; that is, on the Mokau. It is similar to the Waikato country, only a little more broken. It is limestone country.