

1073. Do you consider all the land you have described from the 90th mile to Te Awamutu on the Stratford line is fit for settlement?—Undoubtedly.

1074. Is it agricultural land?—Both agricultural and pastoral country.

1075. I understand that you have traversed this land backwards and forwards all over?—Yes.

1076. And that is a fair description of the whole of it?—Yes. Beyond the country I speak of, of course, I do not know: it may be very good, or bad. I am speaking, of course, only of what I know personally.

1077. Have you seen any minerals anywhere in that country?—On the Stratford line there is coal, undoubtedly.

1078. Is it good coal?—Yes. I have also heard that there is coal on the other line equally as good, but that is only hearsay.

1079. Have you seen any other minerals there—gold, for instance?—No.

1080. You have been through the Tuhua country?—I have crossed it. I have not been right up to Tuhua.

1081. Have you seen any indications of gold there?—I have seen quartz.

1082. I understand that the whole of this piece of country is fit for settlement, and, in fact, is very valuable country for settlement, on the Stratford line?—Yes.

1083. And you do not know anything personally of the country south of that?—Not between that and Stratford; only by what I could see from a distance, and it looked very bad.

1084. *Mr. W. White.*] You only know the country on the central route from mile 100 to 160?—That is all.

1085. How far east of the Stratford line have you been?—Of course I could not say that I passed actually down the line. I know the country pretty well, looking at it from the hills and ranges. I have not been on it since the line was explored. I am speaking of it now as a district.

1086. You did not go over as far as the central route?—I could not say that I have been; I might perhaps know the country; but I am only speaking of the country as it was when I passed over it. There was no railway-line thought of then. I went over it to look at the country from a military point of view. We thought at that time that we might have to fight in that country.

1087. *Mr. Montgomery.*] Your knowledge of the central line extends from mile 160 down to 100. That is close to Murimotu, is it not?—It is a little below Rotoaira, a good distance from Murimotu.

1088. Do I understand you to say that the land along the line would not be improved by turning up the soil?—I do not think it would. It seemed to be of the same nature as the Upper Taupo, and that country certainly did not do so. It is a light soil, with pumice drift underneath. As you go more in the direction of Marton the country gets a little better.

1089. Is it anything of the same nature as what it is to the north of Taupo, and running down the Napier line?—It is something of the same nature. I think it is rather an improvement on that running from Taupo down towards Napier. I think it is land more like the Runanga land—the lower end of Taupo.

1090. You do not know the land below mile 100?—No.

1091. *Mr. Larnach.*] You know all the Mokau line?—Yes.

1092. And how far down from the junction on the Stratford line?—I came down the Mokau Valley. I know from Te Awamutu south to Totio. I then followed the river to the sea.

1093. I understood you to say that the trees there do not make a tap root?—No; they do not.

1094. Do you mean that as an indication of poor soil?—I think so. The cabbage trees are the only trees that make a tap in the portion of the Tuhua country I speak of.

1095. And are there any trees in New Zealand that make a tap root?—Yes; the pine.

1096. In the South the cause of their not doing so is attributed to the rich soil. Pines do not make a tap root there?—In the country I am speaking of their roots grow to the pumice, and when blown down they throw up the earth for yards around, and higher than the side of a house in many instances, and if two of them get blown over they go down like nine pins, having no hold of the ground.

1097. When were you last in that country that you speak of?—I was on a portion of the Stratford line about a year ago. It is about four or five years since I was on the other.

1098. You have never been on the route since it was levelled?—Never on either portion of the country since the lines were explored.

1099. So that you speak of the general nature of the country, not exactly where the lines go?—Yes; I do not know exactly where the lines do go, further than as indicated by the maps now shown to me.

Mr. L. CUSSEN, District Surveyor, Auckland, examined.

1100. *The Chairman.*] We have summoned you here, Mr. Cussen, to give evidence in connection with the North Island Trunk Railway routes. The Committee wish to know first how much of the country which is contiguous to the proposed routes you know personally?—I know the line from Te Awamutu to Te Kuiti; thence down the Mokau River until it comes to Tautoro, about twenty miles farther. I also know the line from Te Kaiti to the south of Ruapehu, on the central line.

1101. All the way through?—Yes, from mile 210 to 90 as marked on the map produced (No. 1), or a distance of 120 miles southward from Te Awamutu.

1102. Starting from Te Awamutu, what is the nature of the country?—Well, it might be described as mixed agricultural and pastoral country. The quality of the soil, I should say, speaking generally, was second class for the first twenty-five or thirty miles. Some of it might be described as first class, some small patches of alluvial deposits, and some volcanic.

1103. Is all that twenty-five miles fit for settlement?—Yes.

1104. And it is partly agricultural and partly pastoral?—It is mostly agricultural.

1105. Is any of it heavily bushed?—A portion of it with kahikatea bush—white pine.