

1148. *Mr. Montgomery.*] You know the country so well by exploration that you are in a position to say that the evidence you have given is based on personal knowledge?—Yes; I have given evidence from personal experience, so far as my judgment goes.

1149. And that experience is sufficient to enable you to speak very positively on the matter?—I feel positive that my information is correct.

1150. *Mr. Fulton.*] How far south along the central line did you say you knew the country?—To Ruapehu, about 120 miles of the line from Te Awamutu southwards.

1151. *Mr. Larnach.*] And how far, on an average, do you know the country on each side along the route?—I know all the country from the East Coast to the West Coast.

1152. Have you discovered any auriferous country in your explorations?—Yes; I have seen gold-bearing quartz—a very small quantity of gold. I had the quartz tested in Auckland.

1153. On what line was that?—That would be near the central line.

1154. Was there much quartz?—A great deal of it.

1155. Do you think there were reefs there?—There is no doubt that there are reefs there, but whether there is gold in payable quantities I feel very doubtful.

1156. You spoke of a part of the country where the pumice is very shallow in places?—Yes, in places.

1157. What soil would there be underneath that?—I think it would be a loose sandy subsoil.

1158. Loam?—There would be a little loam mixed with the sand, especially in alluvial deposits.

1159. Then, grass would grow there?—I do not think it would take grass from surface-sowing. It would require ploughing.

1160. If the pumice were turned underneath, would it?—I would not like to say that.

1161. Judging from your own knowledge of that country, which line would, in your opinion, most benefit the country in relation to any possible future Native difficulty, if you have no objection to answer such a question?—What is known as the central line from Marton, I should think.

1162. *Mr. Montgomery.*] How far have you been down the Stratford line?—I have not been below the Mokau.

1163. Then, you do not know anything about that line?—Not personally. I may say, in explanation, however, that, when I say I think the central line would benefit the country most from the point of view mentioned, I know the country near the Stratford route sufficiently to be in a position to give an opinion on that point. I know the country from the tops of the hills, although I have not been over the line of railway, and not in a position to speak of the quality of the soil in its immediate neighbourhood.

1164. *The Chairman.*] You say you have been on the tops of the hills?—Yes; all through the country.

1165. Can you tell us the general nature of the country that is traversed by the line: is it very much broken?—It is very much broken from the Mokau, to Stratford.

1166. Is there any particular part of that more broken than another?—I think the land in the neighbourhood of Mokau is more broken.

1167. You cannot speak as to the quality of the soil, or the fitness of the country for settlement?—No, I could not, not having been over the particular portion that the railway traverses. I only know that it is much broken.

1168. Can you name any particular hills in that country that you have been on?—I have been on all the principal ones: Rangitoto, Tongariro, and so on.

1169. *Mr. Montgomery.*] But near the Stratford line?—The nearest hill to the Stratford line that I have been on would be at Tautoro, the Papakawai Range, that is near what is marked as the 100th mile on the map.

1170. And south of that?—I have not been on any of the hills close to the line south of that. I have not been on any of the hills within ten miles of the line south, where the line leaves the Mokau River.

1171. *Mr. Fergus.*] You know the South Island pretty well?—I know the portion traversed by the main trunk railway from Dunedin to Moeraki. I surveyed that portion of the line. That is the only portion in the South that I know very well.

1172. Do you consider there is any portion of this line from Te Awamutu to Marton as good as between Dunedin and Moeraki?—There may be a small portion, immediately south of Te Awamutu.

1173. But you think the general character of the country is not so good?—I do.

Mr. A. J. Rawson, Surveyor, of New Plymouth, examined.

1174. *The Chairman.*] You are not in the Government employ?—No. I should like to say a few words in explanation before I proceed to give evidence. It is only fair that the Committee should know, before asking me any questions, that I wrote the report for the Taranaki Vigilance Committee. That was after I left the Government employ.

1175. Were you employed to do that?—Yes.

1176. By whom?—By the Taranaki Vigilance Committee.

1177. Who is at the head of that Committee? Who was it really that employed you?—Mr. Standish, the Chairman.

1178. And who else are on the Committee?—Most of the leading gentlemen in Taranaki.

1179. Can you give the names of some of them?—I suppose it is not a breach of confidence on my part to mention their names. There is the Mayor (Mr. Bayly), the present member and past member (Mr. Samuel and Mr. Kelly), Mr. Weston, and Mr. Thomas King, and I forget the others. I mostly had to do with Mr. Standish himself.

1180. This plan [producing plan] was distributed with that report, was it not?—Yes.

1181. Where did it come from?—It was prepared by me in Taranaki, and brought down to Wellington, by the member, to be photo-lithographed.

1182. What member?—Mr. Samuel.