

1229. Is it difficult of access?—No; the valleys themselves are all quite level valleys. It would be easy to make roads down them.

1230. What width are the valleys?—In its widest place the Ohura would be three miles, and the Mangaroa would also be three miles, and then it narrows in parts to one mile. I do not think it would be any less than a mile in any place.

1231. What would be the size of the totara there?—The largest would run to about 2 feet through.

1232. Not beyond?—They were not large totara trees, but medium ones.

1233. What would be about the average?—Perhaps the average would be about 2 feet.

1234. At about what mileage is this totara timber?—I saw it all the way through from mile 60 to 80.

1235. *Mr. Montgomery.*] You say you do not know anything of the line south of mile 50?—Except from hearsay only.

1236. You could not describe the country from mile 50 on the map down to Stratford. Only from hearsay, and from having seen it from the high hills, which would be rather deceptive.

1237. You have merely looked at it from the high hills?—Yes.

1238. And you do not think that would be sufficient to give an opinion upon?—Except that it was far less broken than I had been led to imagine from the broken country that I saw on the coast. The impression that I got was that the whole country was far better than generally supposed.

1239. How far off the line were you when on the hills?—I went away five or six miles from the line in some places on either side. I saw a greater extent of country than one would imagine going along the line. I was spreading myself outwards a good deal.

1240. *Mr. Fulton.*] Do you submit the report that you wrote for the Taranaki Vigilance Committee as a reliable document, based on your own information?—I do not submit that report at all here.

1241. Do you wish to do so?—No. I was working in the interests of my employers at the time, and it would not be considered a breach of confidence to state that, in writing that report, I did so in the interests of Taranaki. I was out of Government employ at the time. The report has nothing to do with the previous report which I wrote when in the employ of the Government.

1242. Then, you do not say now before the Committee that you can indorse the statements made in the report supplied to the Taranaki Vigilance Committee?—I would not say that.

1243. From personal knowledge?—I have a considerable personal knowledge of it from having been up and down the coast, and I say that that plan [distributed with the report] would bear looking into far more than those who run it down think that it will. It has always been an interesting subject to me, and I have talked to a great many people on it. Of course, if a man is writing for his employers, he makes out the best case he can. At the same time, it was an attempt on my part to get as near the truth as possible, and yet not hide my employers' light under a bushel, as it were.

1244. *Mr. Larnach.*] How long have you been in that district, Mr. Rawson?—I have been moving up and down for the last fifteen years between Taranaki and Wellington. I have been in the Wellington District many years. As a surveyor I have been ten or twelve years up and down the coast.

1245. And this part of the country you have dealt with you have an absolute knowledge of?—Do you mean in this report?

1246. Yes?—I do not use my own knowledge there. I simply quote information from others, and draw inferences from it.

1247. You used the expression "run it down;" do I understand that other surveyors or experts run it down who have a knowledge of the country?—I do not think I know what you mean.

1248. You used the expression just now, and I gathered from it that the report is disapproved of by other experts?—No, not surveyors; I mean one or two people in Wellington, who said it was a shame to mention that there is no much bad country as indicated.

1249. But those gentlemen who "run it down," to use your own words, are they experts or practical men?—Well, Mr. Marchant is an expert. I may say that I am on very good terms with him; but he has objected to some part of it.

1250. Do I infer from the part you have taken in connection with that report that you have a preference for the Stratford line?—I have not such a preference in answering any of the Committee's questions, nor in writing my first report. I did my best to tell the truth.

1251. You have no preference for this line, then?—No.

1252. Having regard to a possible future Native difficulty, which line do you think would be the best in the interests of the country?—I should say they both (Marton and Stratford lines) affect the Native difficulty.

1253. Which line, in your opinion, would be the best?—They are about equal in that respect; they both go through troublesome Natives' country.

1254. Which goes through the most?—They are both about the same, I think, in regard to the total number of Natives.

1255. But there is a difference in the total length of the lines—one is 212 miles. Which goes through the greatest extent of land of the kind mentioned?—I could only use hearsay evidence again in answering that question.

1256. Did you accompany Mr. Mitchelson, the late Minister for Public Works, on his recent tour?—No; I left that part of the country just before he got into it.

1257. *The Chairman.*] The Committee, I may say, Mr. Rawson, were quite aware that you had written this report for the Taranaki Vigilance Committee; and, from the evidence you have given, I gather that you wish this Committee to understand that you were paid to write this report, and that you collected your information from various sources, and simply took what you considered of most value in the interests of the Stratford route?—No; that is not the impression I meant to impart.