

1258. *Mr. Larnach.*] I gathered that your object was to make the report as favourable as possible in the interests of Taranaki?—Well, I suppose one would naturally have to do that, but I did not do it with that intention.

1259. But you were employed by the Vigilance Committee of Taranaki, and, as counsel tries to make the best of his case, your object was to make the best of your case?—It was hardly that. When they asked me to undertake this task I said I thought their interests would suffer for want of sufficient information. What I wanted to do was to bring out more information. I got all the information I could and simply quoted it. I am only saying that a man may be tinged with bias, but this was an attempt on my part to write fairly.

1260. But had the circumstances—the nature of the country—warranted you in making an unfavourable report to the Vigilance Committee?—I would not make a favourable report unless the circumstances were really favourable.

1261. *Mr. Gore.*] You say you found the country better than you expected?—The reason I say that is this: the part of the country where I went in, near the White Cliffs, is very broken. People have only been a little way in before, and they took it all to be of the same nature; but, as a matter of fact, a little distance up the country changes and becomes lower; you get out of the broken country into the better country. When I went inwards I thought I should have nothing but broken country, but to my astonishment I got into better country. I went on to where Mr. Carkeek said the line was impracticable. I found, on a farther exploration of the country northwards, that the line could be carried on, as the rough belt of country into which he had got suddenly ceased, though he naturally at the time thought there was a large extent of it. I got into this country and found it wholly different; the valleys are broad and the hills are low; in fact, in my opinion, it is particularly well suited for settlement. That is the impression I derived from it; it is just the country for settlement. All road work would be easy on it, the bush is light, the hills are easy and low, and the valleys are broad, and there is nothing to prevent its being settled.

1262. *The Chairman.*] What length of that country do you speak of as being open, with broad valleys?—Over the 60 to 95 miles.

1263. What is the nature of the formation: what sort of soil is it?—The valleys are silt deposits.

1264. And what are the hills?—The hills where the rock shows out are papa rock, and the hills themselves are just covered with vegetable deposit.

1265. And where the coal is, what is the formation?—It is the same silt deposit in the valley, but on each side it is black-birch ridges.

1266. But is it papa rock there?—It is sandstone.

1267. With coal underneath or overlaying the sandstone?—Overlaying it.

1268. *Mr. Larnach.*] Is it usual for good soil to be in the neighbourhood of papa rock?—Yes.

TUESDAY, 23RD SEPTEMBER, 1884.

Mr. J. F. SICELY, Authorized Surveyor, examined.

1269. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am an authorized surveyor, at present; but till quite recently I was a Government surveyor. I retired two months ago.

1270. Where do you come from?—From Marton.

1271. Have you been in any way or shape engaged in the Government survey for a main trunk railway line for the North Island?—Yes. In November, 1882, Mr. Marchant, Chief Surveyor, instructed me to explore for a line from Marton to Murimotu; that is, to follow up the Rangitikei and Hautapu Valleys, and I cut an exploring line right through there.

1272. What else?—I came back and reported. I met Mr. Rolleston and the Chief Surveyor at Marton, and I received instructions to grade out the line.

1273. Did you do it?—I sent out my party again, but owing to press of other work it was not completed. I opened further lines, which Mr. Marchant went over to see the nature of the country.

1274. How far did you go up from Marton—how many miles?—I have been right through and beyond the Karioi Station.

1275. How far up the Marton line have you been?—To Karioi, which is not marked on this map (No. 1), but it is on the western corner of the Murimotu Plains.

1276. *Mr. Larnach.*] What distance?—About ninety miles from Marton.

1277. *The Chairman.*] What is your opinion of that country: is it fit for settlement?—Starting from Marton it is settled country for about twenty miles.

1278. It is settled now?—Partially settled.

1279. How far does the settlement extend on either side of the proposed line?—It is an old settled district for about twelve miles, and then it enters into the Paraekaretu and Rangatira Blocks. The former has been settled now for about ten years.

1280. From twenty-three miles northward, what is the nature of the country: do you consider it agricultural country and fit for settlement?—There is a small proportion of agricultural country, but for the most part it is pastora country—hilly bush country.

1281. Is it all hilly bush country?—No; there are flats and terraces in the Rangitikei and Hautapu Valleys.

1282. And are they open, or timbered?—Partially open.

1283. In speaking of agricultural country, do you mean that it is fit for the plough now, or would you have to clear it?—You must clear it first.

1284. It is all more or less covered with timber?—Yes.

1285. Do those remarks apply to the whole of the ninety miles?—No; only about sixty miles.

1286. What is the nature of the country between miles 60 and 90?—You then enter into open country.