

Tangarakau Rivers; I struck across from the central line. The two rivers I speak of are between the 40th and 70th miles marked on the map (No. 1). The coast-line I know nothing about.

1423. What is the general nature of the country on the Te Awamutu-Napier line?—The whole of it passes through pumice country, with the exception of the portion from mile 50, near the Mohaka River. From thence to Aotearoa, at 150 miles, the line passes through pumice country.

1424. Is that any good for cultivation?—No; the bulk of it, particularly about Runanga and Taupo, is extremely poor. When you get into the vicinity of Aotearoa and Tututawa, and on to Awamutu, the country improves, and from mile 150 on to Te Awamutu it is good.

1425. What is the nature of the country for the first forty miles out of Napier?—Of course in the vicinity of Napier the country is extremely good up to forty miles; some of it very good.

1426. And then you get into the pumice country?—Yes.

1427. *Mr. Larnach.*] Is any of the unsold portion on the Napier line good, either in the hands of the Natives or the Crown?—I should say that the Crown had very little remaining unsold that would be affected by this line. Some of the Native land is good, but there is not much of it.

1428. *The Chairman.*] Now, with regard to the central line?—In 1867 I travelled down over the Whakanae track.

1429. How far is that?—From the 60th mile I came down to Marton.

1430. Have you been on that since?—Yes. I returned by going up the Rangitikei River in a canoe to the mouth of the Hautapu, and then followed up the Hautapu, with the short exception of four or five miles that I have spoken of, to Turangarere, to the pa at fifty miles—Ngaurukehu; I then returned through the Otairi Block to Marton, having spent about three weeks on the several journeys that I have mentioned. With the exception of the Whakanae Ranges, the whole of that country is rich forest land. The whole of the country between mile 50 and the Rangitikei River to the eastward is very rich, consisting of undulating hills more or less covered with rich grasses and forest. The Natives have a sheep-run there. The Murimotu Block, through which this line passes, is only fit for grazing purposes. It is not fit for agricultural purposes, the portion nearest Ruapehu being gravel and pumice drift. The lower part near Ruanui and Raketapama is good land. In 1878, 1879, and 1880 I spent several months carrying on surveys and land purchases in the country lying to the south and west of Ruapehu. The land in the vicinity of Rangataua is rich, level, forest country. I should think there are at least 100,000 acres of level land in that neighbourhood. There are about 100,000 acres more lying towards the Wanganui River and down the Wangaehu and Mangawhero which is more broken but equally rich.

1431. Would that be tapped by the railway?—Yes; this land would all be opened by the central line. The Government have portion of Rangataua, Atuahae, and Tawhitoariki Blocks, and have paid money on various other adjoining blocks, the surveys of which have never been completed. For a considerable distance south and west of Ohekune there are large forests of black maire; the largest trees I ever saw of the kind are growing in that neighbourhood.

1432. *Mr. Larnach.*] What sort of timber is it?—It is magnificent timber for sleepers.

1433. Is it pine?—No; it is the ironwood of New Zealand. It is similar to the puriri in the north. It is from 2ft. to 5ft. through.

1434. And is there any quantity of it?—Any quantity. I have never seen it so large anywhere as it is there, and I have travelled through the whole of the North Island. Then, there is a large quantity of matai also, and small patches of totara as well. I think that by following up the Mangawhero, between Raetihi and Kaikawakaroa, the bend could be taken out of the line. The Natives told me that the country is quite level, and Mr. Rochfort told me that he had not been through there at all; he had not time. I may say that the whole of the country between Rangataua and Manganui-a-te-ao and down the Wanganui River as far as Ranana is heavy forest land, more or less broken, but rich as to quality of soil. On the spurs which run down from Ruapehu into the tributaries of the Manganui-a-te-ao the land is poor—a good deal of black birch. The plain, which extends northward on the western side of Ruapehu and Tongariro, is poor pumice country, with swamps. The land between Piopotea Stream and Kawautahi Block—between 110 and 120—is rather broken. About Makokomiko there is a great quantity of totara; that would be about the 130th mile. The land about the Kirikoa Block and Retaruke River is very rich, but broken. I have not been from Makokomiko to Tamaranui—between 120 and 130—but from Tamaranui I have been up the Ongarue a few miles in the direction of Waimeha, but I have not been over any portion between that and the junction with the Stratford line.

1435. Then, you have not been miles 140 and 180?—No. From Te Kuiti to Te Awamutu the land is very good.

1436. *Mr. Montgomery.*] You spoke of a forest of black pine and maire?—The line actually runs through eight or ten miles of it, but the bulk of it lies to the south and west of the line.

1437. How far south and west?—Within ten or fifteen miles.

1438. What is the nature of the country?—It is level country.

1439. *Mr. Larnach.*] Are you a surveyor?—Yes.

1440. You spoke of the Natives having run sheep on part of the country for many years?—Yes.

1441. For how many years do you remember their having done that?—For the last ten years at least.

1442. And they have continued to do so ever since?—Yes; I was there a short while ago, and found they had 12,000 or 14,000 sheep there.

1443. You say you know the line for 120 miles less five. Taking those 115 miles on the central line—that you are acquainted with, northwards from Marton, how far are you acquainted with east and west, on an average?—I know the whole of the country between the Turakina River and the line.

1444. That is on the west; now, what is on the east?—I have not been on the eastward side of the Rangitikei River.

1445. Are you acquainted with eight or ten miles to the eastward?—No; not to the eastward of Rangitikei River.