

of the two rivers. Part of it is good; part of it is pumice. The low bush land about there is good the heavy bush is good timber.

1519. Would you call it agricultural land, any of it?—Certainly; I think a great deal of that is agricultural land: ultimately it will be. It is level enough.

1520. Is there much bush on it?—The open land now is really the worst of it, and the bush is the best. The country about Ruapehu resembles very much the country about Parihaka.

1521. Do you know anything of the land to the north of mile 160?—No.

1522. You say there is a small portion of the Stratford line that you know?—I know the country about the Ohura River. Some of it is very good country.

1523. And you know the Tangarakau, too, do you not?—Yes.

1524. That is, between 40 and 70: what is the nature of that country?—I will describe it from Whangauromona; that is, about 25 miles from Stratford. From there to where the line strikes the Ohura at mile 70 it is exceedingly rough. I do not think there is rougher country in this Island: it is the roughest country I have seen, and I have seen most of this Island. All the streams there run in gorges; the Wanganui River at best runs in a gully.

1525. You know this line?—I have been along the river, which follows the line pretty nearly.

1526. How would you describe that land?—It is very broken.

1527. Take it for five miles on either side of the line?—Very broken, and covered principally with birch. The country is not exceedingly high, but is very broken indeed; in fact, it is not so high as some of the country between the Ohura and Mokau.

1528. Do you know any other part of the line?—No; that is the only portion that I do know.

1529. *Mr. W. White.*] Which line do you think opens up the best country?—The central line.

1530. In speaking of the maire, you did not tell us what size the trees were?—You could get it any size you like—from 2ft. to 5ft. They run very large indeed. It is the finest maire I know of.

1531. What height is it?—30ft. or 40ft. in the barrel.

1532. *Mr. Fergus.*] Have you been in conversation with any of the witnesses who have already given evidence before this Committee?—I have not. All the country I have been speaking about I have seen myself.

1533. *Mr. Montgomery.*] Is the land to the west of Ruapehu like that about Parihaka?—It resembles it somewhat; it is a brownish-black soil, underlaid by a red-clay subsoil.

1534. To the westward of where the line runs through?—Yes.

1535. *Mr. Larnach.*] Have you been in the South Island at all: do you know anything of the land there?—No.

1536. I understood you to say that between 25 and 70 miles on the Stratford line there is some rough country?—Yes; some of the roughest country I have seen in this Island.

1537. From your knowledge of the country, you think there is a very large amount of land fit for settlement on the central line?—Yes; I think the country almost all along it is fit for settlement.

1538. Is there much land in the hands of private individuals there, or is most of it in the hands of the Natives and the Crown?—I cannot say. There has been a lot of trafficking in Native lands since I was there, and I do not know what proportion there is in the hands of Europeans now.

1539. *The Chairman.*] With regard to that piece of the Stratford line which you know, is it available for settlement: could settlers make a living there?—I do not think they could, certainly; it might do in years to come for grazing purposes in large blocks.

1540. Supposing you were told that a railway would be opened there in two years from the present time, would you recommend anybody to buy that land and settle upon it?—Certainly I would not.

1541. Could you take out a block anywhere of the land that you know, of 500 acres, which you could advise anybody to settle upon?—For myself I would not take it if it were given to me.

1542. That is, speaking within a seasonable distance of the line?—Yes; I have intersected the line here; I have crossed the country through which this line runs.

1543. And you have not seen any land on the length that you have described fit for settlement?—No.

1544. *Mr. Larnach.*] What period of time has your acquaintance with that part of the country extended over?—I was born in this country. I have lived here all my life.

1545. Then, you have a thorough knowledge of the country you have spoken of?—Yes; I was one of the first Europeans who ever went there.

1546. *Mr. Montgomery.*] Are you in the employ of the Government?—No; I am a sheep-farmer now at Waikanae, between here and Foxton.

1547. *Mr. Fergus.*]—You have got the Kapiti, have you not?—Yes.

1548. On the land you have been describing, is there anything like you have got at Kapiti?—You mean on the Stratford line.

1549. Yes?—No there is not.

1550. And is it as broken as it is at Kapiti?—It is more broken than at Kapiti.

THURSDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER, 1884.

Sir GEORGE GREY, K.C.B., M.H.R., examined.

1551. *The Chairman.*] ~~The~~ Committee are quite aware, Sir George, that you know a good deal of the part of the country proposed to be traversed by the North Island Trunk Railway, and would like you to give them any information you can as to the nature of that country—its fitness for settlement, and any other information you can give them which would lead them to a fair decision in this matter?—What are the points to which the Committee would wish me to direct my remarks?