

that, recognizing the value of their land, the fear of its being confiscated, in order to pay the expenses of a war which the Natives began, would effectually prevent a disturbance taking place after the railway was made. This state of peace is more likely to prevail, because they themselves now seek redress for injuries, real or supposed, by resort to our laws, or appeals to Parliament.

1564. I understand, then, that it would not matter which line the Parliament determined to construct in that respect; that either line would help to prevent any Native difficulty?—Everything which gives value to the land would have that effect; but I believe the Stratford line, in a military point of view, would be the most serviceable. That is the line I should prefer myself.

Mr. J. BRYCE, M.H.R., examined.

1565. *The Chairman.*] We all know, Mr. Bryce, that you have been concerned a great deal in connection with the transactions of the Government in reference to Native matters and the lands throughout the districts proposed to be traversed by the North Island Trunk Railway. Would you kindly tell the Committee, in the first place, how far you are acquainted with the districts from your own personal observation?—I have had occasion to be at Alexandra as a place of residence for a considerable time—off and on, some months—so that I know the country about Alexandra and between there and Kawhia very well indeed. I may say also that I have travelled the road between Cambridge and Lake Taupo repeatedly, and know the character of the country in that locality very well. I have also been several times—three times at least—between Lake Taupo and Wanganui by various routes. I have not been down the Wanganui River except, of course, near the Town of Wanganui itself; and I have also travelled from Alexandra to the Mokau River, about thirty miles from the sea, then down the Mokau River to its mouth, and from the river to Waitara, and so on to New Plymouth. I have been only a very short distance eastward of Stratford, so that I cannot speak from personal knowledge as to that part of the country, but the Committee will easily understand that I was so much concerned with the Natives that I had to pay very close attention indeed to the explorations that were being made from time to time. In fact, I have stayed at Alexandra and sent men to explore in various directions, and then come back and report to me how they got on, not only with the Maoris, but also as regards the country; consequently, I suppose, I have some knowledge of the country.

1566. The course we have taken in considering the various proposed routes for the railway is to begin with the central line: would you start from any point on that line and tell us what you know of the country?—I am acquainted with the junction of the proposed central line with the main line near Marton. I have also been some considerable distance up the Rangitikei River, but that was before the recent explorations were made. The formation of the banks of the river consists of terraces so far as I have been, and I understand that it is on those terraces that it is proposed to run the railway up the river. I may point out to the Committee that from the commencement of the terraces on the Rangitikei River to a point near Kawhia there is a very remarkable formation of country, varying in width from fifteen to twenty-five miles, and runs right through the country till it comes out at the White Cliffs and Kawhia. It is a remarkable country; I have been over it in many places. We call it papa country. It is underlaid with hard clay called papa rock, and a great deal of it is broken almost beyond conception to those who have not seen it; so that, though in many places streams of water are plentiful, yet one might be compelled to go without it owing to the difficulty of getting at it. For the most part the streams flow within perpendicular banks of various heights, and from those banks, as a rule—I am speaking of the most broken part now—there are very steep hills, covered with bush. When you get to the top of the hill, instead of finding a flat you find a ridge, and have to go down again to another stream similar to the one you have come up from. These banks in many places are so steep that if the bush were cleared I have no doubt that they would slip to a great extent. I merely wish to draw the attention of the Committee to the circumstance of there being this belt of country running through, commencing with the terraces of the Rangitikei River and being continuous till it comes out between the White Cliffs and near Kawhia. That belt of country, you will observe, has to be gone through by some of the proposed routes. The route up the Rangitikei River has upon its immediate left this kind of country, but, as far as I understand, the line itself runs along the terrace formations on the river. At the bend of the line, about the 80th mile, it emerges into open country. I am acquainted with that open country, but I have not been on it since the explorations, so that I cannot say exactly where the line goes. But that open country between Rangitikei and Turakina is of very excellent quality.

1567. That is about ten miles due south-west of Ruapehu?—A great deal of the open country lies behind this. However, what I mean to say is that, after going through a belt of papa country at the back of the Rangitikei District, you come upon open country of very excellent quality. As you go still farther to the eastward it becomes less and less valuable; in fact, as you approach the Rangipo it is a desert. The Rangipo desert is very bad indeed. That lies on the right of the railway. Out to the right of the desert country again there is a lot of very fine limestone country—fine pastoral country, and, I suppose, some of it good agricultural country, too—on the slopes of the Kaimanawa Ranges. That is a country that I think very highly of. But the whole country between the railway and that part is very flat and accessible; carts could be got over part of it, interrupted only by occasional streams. I may also say that a good deal of the Rangipo country is now under lease, nominally to the Government, but practically under lease to a company of private individuals, because the Government is under engagement to hand over a lease to the company; with, however, this reservation, that the Government may reserve to itself the right of taking for settlement purposes 25 per cent. of the land, whatever that may be worth. Well, from that open country the line goes into the bush westward of Ruapehu. That bush country I have not been very far into, though I have been a little into it, and I am aware from personal observation and from reports, that the soil is very rich and excellent. I would not, however, call it first-class country, for this reason: that the elevation above the sea is considerable, and for that reason—and