

that reason only—I would not call it first-class country. My personal knowledge of the country then ceases until the Mokau River is reached. I understand, of course, from the reports, what kind of country it is, but the Committee will be as well in possession of that information as I am. With respect to the country at the other side of the Mokau River, I may say that both or all three of the proposed routes—all the lines with the exception of the Napier line—may be said to be equal; that is to say, the whole of the country opened would be about the same. There is a great deal of good country lying between that and Te Awamutu. I am not quite prepared to say that I think the land is of such super-excellent quality as some people think it is; but the whole of that block, which is a large open block, and very easily accessible (or could be made accessible by roads), is what I would call a valuable country, and the whole of the land there runs from fair to good; although, with the exception of certain alluvial tracts, I would scarcely be prepared to call it first-class. The whole of it, however, is good country. When you get to the watershed between the Waipa and Mokau Rivers, going towards the Mokau, the character of the country changes. It immediately becomes, near the Mokau, a limestone country, and you can see that in many places. For instance, grass-seed takes much more readily in limestone country, and you may often come across flats there which would almost lead you to believe they had been artificially sown, which is not the case. And that is one reason why I do not class the country in the direction of Alexandra as first class, because I observe grass has not taken so readily on the tracks as I expected in that direction. I am now going back in the direction of Mokau.

1568. That is on the Stratford line?—Yes. When you reach the Mokau River you presently get into what I have already described as that papa country, and it is broken to a degree that the Committee would find very difficult to consider without actually going upon it. I believe, as a matter of possibility, that the railway could be taken right down to the Mokau River, but it would be a very formidable undertaking; and, moreover, although you might open the country immediately alongside of the railway, the country is so excessively broken and difficult on both sides that the strip of country would in many places be scarcely wider than the railway itself.

1569. How far does that come down?—The whole distance from where you strike the Mokau, thirty miles from the sea, right down to the mouth. Indeed, the difficulty of getting down the Mokau River appears to have suggested itself so strongly to the Engineers that they considered it more feasible to take a line to the north of it—the Awakino. I was on that proposed route to a certain distance, but not very far. The character, however, is substantially the same as on the banks of the Mokau River. I should say there would be very great difficulty in getting a road to the coast there, and I am certain there would be very great difficulty in getting a line along the coast: that I know. After the White Cliffs are passed, and what is called the White Cliffs Constabulary Station is reached, the difficulties, so far as the construction of a line is concerned, would cease. It is the kind of country for making a line over, very much the same as Waitotara, north of Wanganui. For the first seven or eight miles southward of the White Cliffs it is only a question of a few thousand acres of good country. Behind that lies the broken country that I have described. As the line approaches Waitara the available land widens.

1570. Coming down from the Mokau, how far do you know the line through to Stratford?—I should not like to give any personal description of that. Coming from Te Awamutu until you reach the Mokau, all the lines, as I have said, are very much alike till you reach the Mokau. From Stratford, going east, there is undoubtedly a considerable extent of good country. I have had a bird's-eye view of that country and feel quite certain of that.

1571. How far in from Stratford would that remark apply, roughly speaking?—As far as I could judge I should think it would apply to twelve or fifteen miles, and then you would begin to get into the country I have referred to as papa country.

1572. Do you know how far up on that line the papa country covers?—To a point not very far from the Mokau River. The belt of papa country seems to bend inland there: I do not know whether that is to be accounted for geologically by the volcanic formation near Mount Egmont. About Rotorua, on the eastern route, I may say that is country I have very little admiration for. The country between Lake Taupo and Rotorua is not a good country. I hesitate to go so far as to say that it is country which never will be of any good, because we may find some scientific means of dealing with it. I understand that, for the most part, it takes a flock of sheep about three years to die out upon it. I do not know whether you wish me to say anything on the subject in connection with the Native aspect.

*The Chairman:* I think so. We have asked other expert witnesses.

*Mr. Larnach:* Also in reference to any timber that you know of on the land.

1575. *The Chairman.*] Have you paid particular attention to the forests between Murimotu and Wanganui?—I have not been down the Wanganui River, but there is a large quantity of rimu everywhere about there.

1576. Have you come across any particular forest of maire?—Maire never grows in exclusive groves of forests. I may state, however, that I have seen there the finest maire trees I ever saw. But I do not know that any particular importance can be attached to the maire. There are forests there of rimu and kahikatea and a considerable amount of totara. Totara invariably grows upon land which is sweet upon the surface and with open subsoil. I omitted to say, in reference to the papa country, that, although it is so broken as I have described it to be, nevertheless wherever there is soil the soil is sweet. Generally it is very thin, but it is sweet, and would take grass readily.

1577. Now, what is your opinion on the subject, Mr. Bryce, from any other point of view: which of these routes would you think best in case of any future Native troubles?—I should like to say, in reference to that, Mr. Chairman, that I do not contemplate another Native outbreak. I think we have passed beyond that stage, and, if I might venture to say so to the Committee, I should recommend the Committee not to attach too much weight to that point. I do not mean to say there may not be a difficulty in isolated places—that may occur with either Maoris or Europeans; but anything resembling a general Maori outbreak will never, now, in my opinion, take