

1602. Then, referring to your remarks as to the excessively broken nature of a portion of the country on the Stratford and Mokau lines, would that entail a greater cost than usual in keeping the railroad in, if made: would it be more apt to slip or be affected by the weather if the bush were cleared off?—I think if the bush were cleared off many slips would occur, owing to the steepness of some of the hills; but, as a matter of fact, I do not think papa clay would slip more readily than other clay—in fact, I think less so.

Mr. R. DONKIN, Civil Engineer, examined.

1603. *The Chairman*] Have you been engaged by the Government in connection with any surveys of the North Island Trunk Railway routes?—No.

1604. Then, have you traversed any of the country which any of these routes would run through?—I have been over a considerable portion of it.

1605. Which part?—From Stratford right up to the Mokau, and for along the whole of the line. I have also been along the coast from Waitara to Kawhia, and right up the Mokau River, and up the Awakino.

1606. Did you traverse that country from a professional point of view?—No.

1607. You were looking for minerals?—I was only looking for minerals.

1608. You say you traversed the Stratford line?—Yes.

1609. What is the nature of the country through which that passes?—For about fourteen or fifteen miles from Stratford there is very good country: it is the incline from the mountain range. When you get farther up it becomes rather more broken and ridgy, in consequence of its running between the Waitara and Wanganui Rivers, which run parallel here for some distance. The Waitara runs much farther northward than is represented on the map now before me; it goes towards the Mokau. Then, there is a high range which divides the two. The Tangarakau takes its rise from the same range.

1610. Is there any part of that line between the 15th mile and the junction with the central line at the head of the Mokau, that is more broken than the rest?—It is pretty broken between miles 20 and 60.

1611. What proportion of that land is fit for settlement?—Only some valleys.

1612. Of what width are those valleys?—They are of no great width.

1613. *Mr. Larnach*.] Fall valleys?—Mostly.

1614. *The Chairman*.] Is there any place along that part that you have mentioned where you would care to pick a good farm?—There is only one place—I do not see the creek shown on the map produced—it runs into the Waitara, and it is pretty fair country there.

1615. What extent?—There is no great extent of it.

1616. Say generally what you think of that country?—The country when you get past the Tangarakau into the Ohura Valley is good country and fit for settlement. I have been all over that from the top to the bottom of it, and there is good country towards the central line up to Tamaranui. There is very good country in the upper Mokau district. It is a limestone district near the Awakino; there is very good country indeed up there.

1617. Did you succeed in finding any minerals in your travels?—Only coal and iron deposits.

1618. *Mr. Larnach*.] No gold?—Not down here. The gold country lies between Taupo and the central line. Wangaponga is where the gold is said to be.

1619. Did you find gold there?—I did not get so far as that; the Natives would not permit me.

1620. Why do you think there is gold there, then?—From specimens of quartz that I saw.

1621. Then, you saw specimens of quartz?—Yes; but there was no gold in them. The best country is in the Ohura Valley, with some creeks running out of the river. At Mangaroa it is very good country.

1622. *The Chairman*.] What proportion do you consider fit for settlement?—All round the Ohura is fit for settlement, and to the north of the Mokau. I have been there since Mr. Rochfort visited it, and my impression was that, if ever the central line was adopted, to get to the New Plymouth Harbour a line could be taken across from Tamaranui.

1623. *Mr. Larnach*.] How far is that from Te Awamutu?—It is about one hundred and sixty miles from Marton; the line would come in to about the Urunui on the coast.

1624. *The Chairman*.] Would it not cross this great dividing range?—There is easy country to be got from Tamaranui, nearly due west to Urunui, on the coast, within ten miles of Waitara.

1625. *Mr. Larnach*.] What distance would that be?—About fifty miles. The timber upon any of the lines in the district is chiefly tawa, mixed with some pines; but at Tamaranui there is very good totara, very large fine trees indeed.

1626. *The Chairman*.] Which of the two lines would open up the most country for settlement—the central route or the Stratford route?—I have not been down the central route south of Tamaranui. Towards Te Awamutu there is very good country, though there is a little difficult country about the 190th mile on the central line.

1627. *Mr. W. White*.] Did you notice any ballast along the Stratford line?—Yes.

1628. At what point?—Both on the Tangarakau and creeks leading from it there are masses of it. But it is more like concrete; it is not loose; it is all set together like concrete.

1629. It is not the ordinary ballast, then?—No; it is not.

1630. Is it a kind of rock?—No; it is completely massed together.

1631. *The Chairman*.] Would you have to break it?—It would take a great deal of knocking to pieces.

1632. *Mr. W. White*.] More like ordinary stone-breaking?—Fully as much, if not more.

1633. Would you require blasting?—Yes, certainly. Picks would not stand it at all.

1634. You have not seen any ordinary ballast along that line?—I have seen some rotten rock which might do for ballast.

1635. Is that the papa rock?—Yes; that is the only stuff that I saw that would be of any good.