

1636. Would that be of any good?—Yes; that would do very well for ballast.
1637. Railway ballast?—Yes
1638. Is the concrete of which you have spoken anywhere near the railway-line?—The line goes very close past it.
1639. Within a few chains?—Within one chain of it it crops out in several places
1640. *Mr. Larnach.*] Do you come from New Plymouth?—I came through there lately.
1641. But you do not reside there, I mean?—Within about thirty miles of it.
1642. You reside in that district, then?—Yes.
1643. Have you been many years there?—The first time I was there was in 1867, when I was there for only a few months. Lately, I have been there for several years.
1644. You have had experience, I believe, in surveys in the other Island?—Yes, and also in New South Wales. I may say I have had considerable experience.
1645. Taking what is usually considered fair country for settlement in the South Island, is there much country equally good adjacent to either of the lines you have been speaking about?—There is nothing like the Canterbury Plains. It is all broken; but I should say it was fair, average New Zealand country, and the soil is good soil, even to the tops of the ridges.
1646. Are you aware that a great deal of the Canterbury Plains is very indifferent country?—Yes, I am aware that gravel comes very close to the surface.
1647. That is, the country adjoining the main trunk line in the other Island?—Yes.
1648. Do you mean to say that the country here is not so good as that country on the Canterbury Plains?—It is better soil, but it is not level; that is what I mean to convey.
1649. Then, although some of this country is very broken, may I infer that it is good?—Yes.
1650. Good soil?—Good soil.
1651. Does the country that is very broken extend more on the Stratford line, or to the central line?—More to the Stratford line.
1652. What extent on the Stratford line, in length, is there of that broken country?—There is broken country from the 20th to the 70th mile, and then it gets better; and then it is broken again till you get to the Mokau watershed.
1653. That would be about fifty miles?—Yes. The coast-line, I may say, would open up little or no good land.
1654. You know a great deal of the country where the central line lies?—Only from Tamaranui northwards.
1655. That is, about 100 miles south of Te Awamutu?—Yes; it would be quite that. There are some pumice flats up the Ongarue River I may state.
1656. Is that good for settlement?—It is very good soil on the tops. The Natives have clearings on the tops of some of the hills, and very rich soil indeed it is; but the pumice country, I think, is not of any good; it would never do to cultivate.
1657. Which line, in your opinion, would open up the best country for settlement, and most of it?—Of course I could not give an opinion about the quality of the land on the southern part of the central line from Tamaranui.
1658. I understand you to say that, if the central line were made, the interests of the country would be better served by making a branch from Tamaranui to the west: would that be better than making the Stratford line?—Looking to the future I believe it would.

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FRIDAY, 26TH SEPTEMBER, 1884.

MR. T. HUMPHRIES, Chief Surveyor, Taranaki Provincial District, examined.

1659. *The Chairman.*] We have asked you to come down here to give us any information that you can in connection with the district of which you are Chief Surveyor, in reference to the question of a route for the North Island Main Trunk Railway. You are, of course, fully aware that there are four routes proposed, three of which run to the westward of Lake Taupo. I should like you, in the first place, to kindly state what part of the country you are personally acquainted with?—The country directly affected by the proposed lines with which I am personally acquainted is not very much, on account of the district along the Stratford route not having been dealt with until lately. It is only within the last year or two that we have had opportunity to go into it. But I have seen the reports of Messrs. Skeet, Rawson, and others who have reported to me on it, and also conversed with them about it. As far as the Mokau line is concerned, I am personally acquainted with the portion between Waitara and Mokau, and a short distance beyond that river—in all, about forty miles; and I have overlooked some of the country traversed by the Stratford line from the trig. stations that I have been on in its vicinity.

1660. Have you been on any of the country traversed by the central route?—No.

1661. Have you been on the upper part of the Stratford route, towards the head of the Mokau?—No, not at all. I know, however, the country fifteen or twenty miles parallel to the coast. Beyond the fifteen miles parallel to the coast I have been able to overlook the country from the trig. stations, but that, of course, would give me no idea of the detail of the country. I produce a map showing the trig. stations, with their heights, and topographical features of the country, copied from office records.

1662. Coming out from Stratford, after you have crossed the confiscation boundary, what do you know of the nature of the country traversed by the Stratford line?—I have not been actually on it, so that it is simply from the official reports that have come into my hands that I know it. I have with me a report on it from Mr. Carkeek to myself, which was made in July last.

1663. Is that report of Mr. Carkeek's in print?—No, in manuscript.

1664. Looking from the trig. stations across the route traversed by the Stratford line, what opinion did you form of it: was the country fit for settlement, or was it bush, or what?—It is all