

bush, with a few patches of open country in it of sometimes 1,000 acres or so, and a very large area of it fit for settlement.

1665. Is the country about here all of the same formation—you say you have been on the land close to the Stratford line to the westward?—The country to the westward is hilly.

1666. Do you know what the geological formation is of that part you speak of to the westward of the route?—There is limestone, which seems to go right through from Onairo. There are outcrops of it running due south of Onairo to the Wanganui.

1667. Where does the papa rock commence—where does it strike the line of railway?—I am not aware.

1668. *Mr. Montgomery.*] Have you been on all the trig. stations that are marked on the map you have produced?—Not all of them.

1669. Within ten or fifteen miles along the line?—I have been on several of them; you could see all the surrounding country from those.

1670. What you personally know respecting the line of railway and the country through which it passes is from looking at it from those trig. stations?—Yes.

1671. How many miles are they off the line?—Some of them are fifteen or sixteen miles off.

1672. You say the country is all forest except a few acres?—Yes.

1673. *The Chairman.*] Coming out from Stratford, how far is the land in the hands of Europeans—in lawful occupation by the Europeans, of course?—With the exception of about ten miles, the first thirty miles of the line goes through private holdings.

1674. When was the last large block got possession of by the Europeans?—It was about two years ago. The survey is now being completed.

1675. Who are the people?—Thomas Bayly, of Waitara, and others.

1676. *Mr. Montgomery.*] What is the size of the block?—30,000 acres.

1677. *The Chairman.*] And the railway runs right through it?—Yes.

1678. Are you aware of any negotiations going on for any land besides that?—Only with the Crown.

1679. But I mean with private individuals?—No, not now. There are blocks of 12,000, 8,000, and 30,000 acres which are in the hands of private individuals.

1680. *Mr. Fergus.*] Do you know what they paid for the land comprising the block of 30,000 acres?—No. They were paying about half-a-crown for the other lands about there at the time.

1681. Is it good land, this private land?—Yes, some of it is very good; it is bush land. The 8,000-acre block is a good block.

1682. To whom does this belong?—To Mr. Bayly.

1683. Has he got the lot?—Yes.

1684. That is, 50,000 acres?—Yes.

1685. *The Chairman.*] What occupation does Bayly follow?—He deals a great deal in cattle, and goes in for land speculations; little else.

1686. Are you aware that there was a Vigilance Committee appointed in connection with this railway matter in Taranaki?—Yes.

1687. Was Bayly one of its members?—I could not say; I never heard of his being on it. He belongs to Waitara. Mr. Charles Brown is, I believe, part owner of the blocks alluded to.

1688. Is Mr. Brown an officer of the Government now?—No.

1689. How long is it since he was?—Some three or four years. These blocks were under offer to the Government at the time that he was Civil Commissioner, and the Government instructed him to drop them all.

1690. And then he resumed negotiations on his own account?—Mr. Bayly took them over. I think he paid the deposit that the Government had paid on them.

1691. How long has Mr. Bayly been in that district?—He has been there for thirty or forty years.

1692. Then, he came out as one of the old settlers?—Yes.

1693. *Mr. Larnach.*] You know nothing of the central line at all from your own knowledge?—No.

1694. How many miles are there of that particular portion of the Stratford line to which you have referred as having no knowledge of it?—You might almost say the whole of it, excepting close to Stratford—that is, direct personal knowledge.

1695. Then, you spoke of the country judging from what you saw by overlooking it?—Yes.

1696. When you speak of “overlooking the country” from a certain standpoint, how can you judge of the quality of the land or its suitability for settlement?—I said I could tell nothing of the detail of the country, but what I stated was from information gathered from official reports supplied to me.

1697. You said you had formed an opinion of the country by overlooking it?—Yes.

1698. But if it is hilly and forest you could not judge of it?—One could not judge of the detail, of course, but would see that there were no high ranges in the way, and get a general idea of it.

1698A. How long is it since the title of the 30,000 acres to which you have referred was acquired?—An interlocutory order was issued some two years ago, but the final order will not be given until survey is completed, which will likely be done in a few months.

TUESDAY, 30TH SEPTEMBER, 1884.

Mr. C. W. HURSTHOUSE, Surveyor, New Plymouth, examined.

1699. *The Chairman.*] Are you in the Government service?—Yes.

1700. In what department?—I am in the Public Works Department, but at present I am working for the Survey Department.

1701. Are you acquainted with the country through which the proposed Napier line runs?—I know part of it.