

matai (though not very much matai), a good deal of kahikatea, and a great deal of maire on the flats and lower hills.

1737. Are the maire trees of any size?—The largest are about 2ft. 6in. in diameter.

1738. And of what height—About 15ft. or 20ft. would be a good barrel; some would run up higher.

1739. Now, do you know the coast-line pretty well?—Yes.

1740. What sort of country does that run through?—From the junction—which is about the 100th mile on the Stratford line—it runs into the valley of the Awakino; and the country is good for about ten miles from the junction—a good broad valley, of open and bush country in about equal proportions, and the soil appears to be very good. The width of the valleys is from a quarter of a mile to one mile and a half. Below this point the valley narrows in, and is very little better than a ravine for four or five miles.

1741. Then along the coast?—Then it emerges to the coast, and along the coast the level land is very narrow, and intersected by deep gullies.

1742. Is there any large proportion of land that is fit for settlement, and could be utilized by settlers to the eastward of that line?—No; it is a rough country.

1743. You have crossed from the coast-line to the Stratford line in two or three places?—No; only in one place.

1744. All across that distance, what is the nature of the land?—It is all broken. The 10 per cent. that I said I thought was agricultural would apply to all that triangular piece beginning at the White Cliffs and running up to the junction of the two lines—in other words, the land across from the White Cliffs to, say, fifty miles on the Stratford line, as marked on the map, and northwards, to the junction of the coast-line, is all more or less broken, excepting what I have described in the Awakino Valley and the Mokau Valley.

1745. And of the whole of that block you think 10 per cent. would be all that is fit for agricultural land at the outside?—For ploughable, agricultural land.

1746. Is that wooded—covered with bush?—Yes.

1747. It is not ploughable, then, till it is stripped of bush?—It is light bush—at any rate, not very heavy.

1748. In your travels across that land, have you come across any minerals?—No.

1749. No coal?—I have not seen any coal myself, but I know there is some in that country.

1750. *Mr. W. White.*] What is the size of the timber along the line that you speak of?—It is of all sizes, up to 5ft. or 6ft. in diameter.

1751. Good marketable timber?—Some is; but it is not at all a good timber bush that the line goes through.

1752. And it would not pay to work by saw-milling?—Not as a rule. There are places where saw-mills would pay, but it would not develop a very great timber industry.

1753. And, in speaking of the agricultural land, you imply all through that the timber would require to be removed first before it would be available as agricultural land?—It would require felling and burning.

1754. *Mr. Fergus.*] You know the country pretty well between Hawera and New Plymouth?—Yes.

1755. Is the country from Stratford inwards for that distance of sixty miles, or any portion of it, as good as the land between New Plymouth and Hawera—that is, where the line goes through?—I have only been four or five miles from the Stratford end, and that is as good.

1756. But, at the 60th mile, is that good?—No; that is very broken.

1757. Well, downwards from Te Awamutu to the junction of the coastal and Stratford lines—you know all that country?—Yes; I do.

1758. Would you say that was as good as the land between Hawera and New Plymouth?—No.

1759. Even on the coast-line?—Even on any of the lines.

1760. Is it bushed?—No; it is open.

1761. And it is not so good as the land between New Plymouth and Hawera?—It is not as good as the land at the New Plymouth end.

1762. Take it all through?—If you take the average it is not nearly so good.

1763. Approximately, what area of land do you think the Stratford line would open up: what is the acreage of the agricultural land that would be opened up from Te Awamutu down as far as the King country extends, say?—I do not know the line down to the boundary of the King country.

1764. You only know it as far as where?—The Mokau.

1765. Then, what is the approximate acreage, from Te Awamutu down to the Mokau that would be fit for agricultural land?—Do you mean the percentage?

1766. I mean the acreage you could give?—I would like, before answering that question, to know how far you mean on each side of the line.

1767. Practically, what I want to know is this: what quantity of land would be benefited by the railway?

*The Chairman:* We have had it described to us that there is a range of hills which come between the proposed route of railway and the coast; and perhaps Mr. Fergus would limit the witness up to that.

*Mr. Fergus:* That is the limit.

1768. *The Chairman.*] Then, say within fourteen or fifteen miles of the line?—I think it would open up a tract of country equal to forty miles by fifteen, which is six hundred square miles.

1769. *Mr. Fergus.*] Do I understand you to mean that all that country is agricultural?—No.

1770. That is the point. What proportion is agricultural?—I should say that half of that is agricultural. It would be equal to an area of three hundred square miles.