

1808. What distance east and west would you say was good country?—That I could not say. When I was there, which was in 1858, I walked along the Native track, and you see very little on each side; and I have never been there since.

1809. You spoke of swamps being there: are these large?—The swamps I referred to were at the Te Awamutu end.

1810. Are those large?—There is a good-size one there.

1811. Would they be expensive or difficult to drain?—That one would; but the majority of them would be easy.

1812. Are there many swamps in that district?—No; in fact, there is only one patch of country of about nine or ten thousand acres that is really swampy.

1813. And that patch would not be difficult to drain?—I think the greater portion of it would be easy to drain; but there is one swamp that the river floods, and that would be difficult to drain.

1814. What is the size of that one?—I have only seen it from a distance, and I should guess it to be from one thousand to fifteen hundred acres.

1815. *Mr. Fergus.*] I would like you to be very particular in returning to a question put by Mr. Montgomery, and be very certain about it. You say from Te Awamutu down to the 90-mile mark the land is open, and there is no timber on it, and you would call it bush land?—I certainly should not call it bush land. There is a place called Pukearuhe where there is the only bush worth mentioning.

1816. From Te Awamutu, say, for thirteen miles southward, is that all open country?—Certainly—most decidedly; there is not a tree there.

Mr. F. Hicks, Butcher, Auckland, examined.

1817. *The Chairman.*] It has been represented to the Committee that you have travelled over a good deal of the country southward of Te Awamutu, and between that and the country traversed by the proposed trunk railway coming down to Marton. Would you state what part of the country you have travelled over?—Principally my travelling has been between Cambridge and Napier.

1818. What part have you travelled over on the western side?—I made short excursions inland, though never very far; but during twelve years' experience I have come across people who are familiar with the country.

1819. Do I understand that you have not been to the westward of Lake Taupo at all?—I have come from Lake Taupo past Tongariro and Murimotu.

1820. How far south of Murimotu have you come?—I just took the track to Napier back again.

1821. Do you know anything of the Stratford line?—No.

1822. How would you describe the land between Cambridge and the Waikato crossing?—It is pumice country. This does not, of course, include the country around Cambridge.

1823. All pumice country?—All pumice country.

1824. Does it come as far the Mohaka?—Yes; that is practically the boundary of it, but it even extends beyond that.

1825. Coming across from Taupo to Tongariro, what country is that?—It is of a similar character.

1826. Still pumice?—Yes.

1827. And is there any change as you come southward down to Murimotu?—The Murimotu itself I consider very inferior; the plain is very inferior.

1828. Could you tell how far to the westward you came of the Murimotu Block?—I took the ordinary track, and I came partly down the Wangaehu River.

1829. You crossed the pumice country at Tongariro?—Yes.

1830. And then struck the Wangaehu River?—Yes; and then followed the Napier track along by Patea.

1831. Did you go no farther south than that?—Neither south nor west.

1832. Then, practically, you only just touched what we know as the Murimotu country?—I practically saw the whole of the Murimotu Plain.

1833. *Mr. W. White.*] You know very little of the interior line at all?—The line just skirts where I was at Murimotu.

1834. Only at Murimotu?—Yes.

1835. You do not know anything about the Mokau line?—Nothing.

1836. Nor of the Stratford line?—No; I have been, however, on the West Coast country.

1837. What do you mean by the West Coast country?—I know from Wanganui to Waitara.

1838. That line is constructed now?—Yes, I am aware of that.

1839. Then, you only know the Marton line in a little bit of the Murimotu country?—Yes.

1840. Your principal knowledge is of the line from Alexandra to Napier?—Yes.

1841. Who suggested you as a witness, Mr. Hicks?—Mr. Thomson, I believe; I am not sure.

1842. It seems you do not know anything of the country at all?—My knowledge of the country generally is simply this: my impression is, that for 100 miles the country along the central route is no use at all for settlement; it is absolutely useless.

1843. *Mr. Montgomery.*] Did you say you had been over the Murimotu Block?—I have ridden through it.

1844. What is the extent of that block?—I could only give a rough estimate. The plain that I rode through would be about fifty to sixty thousand acres.

1845. You say the land is not good?—Certainly it is not; it is very inferior.

1846. Was it carrying stock?—I saw no stock when I was riding through it. The stock had been taken off some considerable time. There was no feed on it.

1847. What stock were they?—Sheep, principally.

1848. Your business as a butcher would lead you to look out for stock?—Not necessarily; I only looked at the country.