

2030. And, taking into consideration that the timber is all along the line where you require it, do you think 40s. is a fair price?—I do.

2031. Could it be done for 30s.?—I think 40s. would be a fairer price, because, of course, it is not as if it was beside the market; you have to provide for the men at a distance from civilization.

2032. Is the timber close to the bridges?—It is close to the bridges, and could be got within a very short distance almost anywhere. Of course, at the Te Awamutu end the timber is farther off, but the bridges are very few and small there; there is hardly anything in the way of bridging.

2033. And you think that black maire is preferable to birch in the way of stringers?—I think, perhaps, the birch is the better timber, because it is rather lighter.

2034. But for strength and durability?—I think I should give the preference to birch for durability. I do not know about strength.

2035. Is the ballast anywhere handy along the line?—Yes; there are a great many places where it could be got within reasonable distance all through.

2036. You provide for the length of roads the same length as the railway?—I do.

2037. Would you require that length?—I think it is quite possible something like that length would be required, but the roads would almost entirely be in open country where they would be wanted; of course leading to the places where stores and contractors' plant, and so on, could be got.

2038. Do you know what the average cost of the line would be from Marton to New Plymouth?—I do not know.

2039. *Mr. Fergus.*] You said, Mr. Rochfort, that maire would do for bridging-work. Did you ever see a bridge in which there was any maire, except for straining-blocks or joggles; or did you, in fact, ever see it used anywhere?—No, I have not seen it; but I have heard in the department that it has been used.

2040. Could you say where it has been used except as joggles and straining-blocks?—No, I could not. I think this line is an exception, as it goes through a country where there is a great deal of it.

2041. Did you ever try to manipulate a piece of dry maire?—Yes; but the green maire is very different.

2042. Afterwards it gets very hard?—Very hard indeed.

2043. So that an axe would not go into it?—Exactly.

2044. Do you mean to say you are going to take black maire for the bridging on this line?—Only in places where it was more accessible.

2045. You say that you reckon the ballast at 2s. per yard: is that so?—Yes.

2046. Do you know of any piece of line in New Zealand that has been ballasted for 2s. per yard?—Yes, I do.

2047. Where?—The Point line, from Washback to Opawa.

2048. There is gravel all the way along there?—I suppose, as a rule, it is pretty nearly everywhere in New Zealand.

2049. Not by any means?—In a great many parts.

2050. There is no ballast on the line from Stratford, and I know there is none from Patea right down to Wanganui. What is the average length that you would leave to bring the ballast on this line?—I do not think the greatest lead would exceed two miles.

2051. And you think you could get it done for 2s.?—On looking over my papers I find the cost allowed for ballast was 2s. 3d. and a fraction per cubic yard; completion, after grading, was calculated at £3,000 per mile, made up thus:—

Permanent-way, 56lb. rails and fastenings ...	...	...	£750 per mile.
Sleepers ...	...	...	350 "
Platelaying ...	...	...	100 "
Ballasting ...	...	...	200 "
Rolling-stock ...	...	...	700 "
Stations, assuming one wayside station (including sidings and buildings) to every five miles ...	...	...	600 "
Contingencies to provide for varying price of iron, &c. ...	...	...	300 "
Total ...	...	...	£3,000 "

2052. For an average lead of two miles?—I think so, after the line is laid. I do not say there would be an average lead of two miles; what I mean is, that it could be got almost always within two miles.

2053. *Mr. Montgomery.*] Is there any ballast to the westward of Ruapehu and Tongariro, and going north?—There is ballast in nearly every stream.

2054. What kind of ballast is it?—Shingle and small gravel, also good-sized gravel, mixed.

2055. And how are you off for ballast to the north of the dividing range between that and Te Awamutu?—A good deal of ballast shows in the creeks and in the places where the terraces show a cliff.

2056. Gravel?—Gravel and small boulders.

2057. Then, south of Ruapehu, how are you for ballast down to Marton?—There is ballast all down the Hautapu, and plenty of ballast in the Wangaehu.

2058. All gravel?—Yes.

2059. And farther down?—There is ballast in several creeks that come through the line. In fact, I do not think there is any place more than four miles distant where you cannot see ballast all along the line, and I believe when the ground is opened up a great deal more will be found; indeed I am sure of it, because it can be seen in the cliffs, even to the Rangitikei River.

2060. *Mr. Larnach.*] Do I understand you to say you had seen black-maire wood used for bridges?—No; I said I had heard of its being used for stringers.