

The whole of the bush in the Eao, the Mangaroa, the Waikaka, and the Ohura would be easier than ordinary bush to clear, as the underscrub is of a light nature and free from supplejacks, and would be cleared out very much by cattle, of which there are none running there now. Similar bush on the Kiwitea Block (Manawatu District) was rapidly taken up in consequence of the wild cattle having cleared away the underscrub.

The few Native tracks are much overgrown.

No Natives are settled on the Ohura permanently, except near its junction with the Wanganni and between the head of the Ohura and Ongaruhe, nor are there any Natives on the Eao, the Mangaroa, or the Waikaka. There are several settlements on the Mokau-iti.

The railway route from Stratford would tap the whole of the good country here spoken of. Independently of the railway there appear to be only two ways of getting at this country from the coast by roads: either by the Mimi or Tongaporutu into the Makarakia, from there into the Waitara, and from there into the Tangaraku, and out of that into the Eao; or in from the Awakino across the Mokau, and up the Mokau-iti into the Waikaka. All road work in the country itself would be comparatively easy.

The most central point, say, for a township would be on the Ohura, about the junction of the Waikaka.

The country was seen from the route and from many surrounding hills which I had occasion to climb.

Having been engaged for some time in farming, and having been over much of the Wellington, Nelson, and Taranaki Provinces, I venture to state that about 250,000 acres of the country here spoken of is well suited for settlement—in fact would be readily taken up in the Wellington, and eagerly in the Nelson, Province. The nature of the country would admit of moderate-sized sections coming in for a share of bush and scrub or fern, and flat, with grazing hills.

I have noticed that the few who have penetrated to this part of the country are too apt to undervalue it from the present temporary difficulties to be met with; also judging it by such a standard as the Waimate Plains, forgetting that such land as that has long ago been taken up in other parts of New Zealand.

The Taupo track is much overgrown, and is almost impassable for horses; but, in the event of a gold rush taking place to Tuhua, a man could walk from the mouth of the Mokau by this track to Tuhua in three days. Dr. Hochstetter travelled by this track; he appears to have mistaken the Waikaka branch of the Ohura, and he also describes the pumice-stone as extending right down the Ohura, which it does not, as previously mentioned.

With the exception of a few Wanganui Natives, all those met with were friendly and willing to assist in any way.

The Chief Surveyor, New Plymouth.

I have, &c.,

ARTHUR J. RAWSON.

No. 3.

Mr. R. W. HOLMES to the ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF, Wellington.

Sir,—

19th June, 1884.

I have the honour to report on the character of the land and minerals found along the proposed line of railway, between Stratford and Te Awamutu.

From Stratford to about twelve miles the soil consists of volcanic earths, with a good covering of vegetable matter, suitable for grass and root crops, but it does not seem heavy enough for growing grain. From twelve to fifty-one miles the volcanic soil gives place to alluvial deposits, consisting of clay with a good black soil on top, and papa rock beneath. This land I consider is better than the preceding, but, owing to its broken nature, only small patches in the narrow valleys could be utilized for cropping, the remainder would form good grazing land. The bush consists of white and red pine, rata, and matai, the undergrowth being light and open.

From fifty-one miles to sixty-three miles in the Tangaraku Gorge and vicinity, the land is useless for agricultural purposes owing to the bad soil and precipitous nature of the country, the tops of the cliffs being covered with black birch. The black birch is all *fagus fusca*, of a good size, and will form good bridge material and sleepers.

From sixty-three miles to eighty-three miles in the Eao, Mangaroa, Ohura, and Waikaka Valleys the land is good, especially the Eao and Mangaroa Valleys; all alluvial with clay subsoil. The continuous bush terminates in the Ohura Valley at about seventy-three miles, it then becomes broken up with fern clearings; where the fern has been growing undisturbed the top or vegetable soil is very good; but in many places, particularly along the Native tracks, it has been damaged by repeated fern fires. There is first-class white and red pine, matai, and rata in the Eao and Mangaroa Valleys, particularly in the former.

From eighty-three miles to ninety miles the soil is good, but the land is too broken for anything but grazing purposes.

At ninety miles the continuous fern country begins, and continues all the way to Te Awamutu; the land is good, with a clay subsoil.

From ninety-four miles to one hundred and twenty miles limestone shows in numerous places, cropping out above the surface.

From one hundred and twenty miles and to Te Awamutu very little limestone is seen.

Along the alternative line, up the Ohura, the good land continues to eighty-seven miles, it then enters the pumice-stone country, which continues for the remainder of the distance. The pumice