

and I think the railway should for the present end there. I think there would be a consensus of opinion that, from Turangarehe to the present northern terminus of the Main Trunk line, Mokau, with the exception of this good bit of country around Ohakune—which would be better served by the Wanganui River—there is no land fit for settlement.

38. This is over a tract of 120 miles?—Yes; that is all I can tell you about the central route.

39. *Mr. Mills*: I should like to ask if Mr. Lawry was over the block, which skirts the eastern side of the Waimarino?—No.

40. *Mr. Carncross*: What time of the year was it when you saw those trees you were speaking about?—We were travelling about the 4th March.

41. *Mr. Wright*: Would that be the best time for your journey?—Yes; I should not like to do the travelling now.

TUESDAY, 13TH SEPTEMBER, 1892.

Mr. F. LAWRY, M.H.R., further examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] Will you kindly give the Committee your evidence as to the merits of the Ngairu route?—I think it was about the 20th of January last a large party left Auckland *via* Mokau for the purpose of inspecting the Ngairu route, which lies between the point of divergence on the Ongarue River and Stratford or Ngairu. The first seven or eight miles of the track we found to be through the pumice country, some of it broken, and the ridges covered with stunted fern and scrub, through which the pumice could be seen 200 or 300 yards off. This class of country continued to a point, say, of two miles below where they struck the Ohura River. At the point indicated we crossed a small creek when the character of the country suddenly changed; or, in other words, we had reached the end of the pumice country in that direction, and the country appears on the river plains there to be simply an alluvial deposit of a very rich quality, the soil being composed of a very rich deep loam. We had no doubt whatever about the quality of the land on the river flat, but were not so satisfied with the ridges and undulating downs lying at our left, and stretching as far as the eye could reach from the river bank. We saw a bit of a track leading up to one of the ridges, and we rode up it to a considerable distance, expecting, when we arrived at a certain elevation, that we would be able to take a better view of the surrounding country, and, consequently, form a better opinion of the general character of the country. We, however, found that the higher up we got the more difficult it was to see anything, as the fern was higher than our heads when we sat on our horses. We had no alternative but to return by the track we came. We followed the Ohura River, crossing it over a bridge at a point about where the railway-line would cross. The farther we got down the wider the valley appeared to become, and after we crossed the river we went across a flat, about four or five miles in width, of the same character of heavy alluvial land until we struck the Mongaroa Creek. We followed up this creek for a considerable distance—I should say for eight or ten miles—and found the land flat and alluvial—in fact, very similar in quality to the Ohura Valley flat, which we had previously crossed.

2. What is the name of the valley you describe as four miles wide?—It is crossed between the Ohura and Mongaroa Rivers, getting on towards the Huitahi. Roundly speaking, I should say from the Ohura we travelled twelve or fourteen miles before coming to anything that might be considered hilly or rising ground. I do not think, Mr. Chairman, I need go into the whole thing in detail.

3. If you would kindly specify the character of the land in each ten- or fifteen-mile section, then we shall have some idea of the portion that is good or bad?—After leaving the flat I have already described, we began to ascend some hills, some of them from 300ft. to 500ft. high. We were unable to determine whether we were then on the exact line of railway or not; but we were all satisfied that the character of the soil on the tops of the highest hills was exactly similar to that found on the flats below, the growth being precisely the same—the same trees—the same under-
scrub, where there was any. I will say this: there was very little change in the character of the land until we began to go down the valley to the Paparata Creek, which is a tributary of the Tangarakau River. The character of the country, as far as we could ascertain, coming down the Paparata Creek, was broken, but the soil is very fine—rich soil lying upon beds of papa rock. In a small tributary of this creek we crossed a seam of coal apparently of very fine quality, I should think from 6ft. to 8ft. in thickness.

4. True coal?—Yes, very similar in quality to the Mokau coal. It is very similar to what Mr. E. M. Smith, M.H.R., is now exhibiting in the lobbies of the House. This seam of coal was found about one and a half miles before we reach the Tangarakau River. After passing from the Tangarakau Gorge, which we found to be very rough, and bounded by high and precipitous cliffs and ranges composed of papa rock underneath the soil, we crossed at an elevation, if I remember rightly, of about 450ft., with very good soil to the very top. Descending again into the valley of, I think, Waitohine —

5. That is a tributary of the Wanganui?—Yes, they are all tributaries of the Wanganui. In this next valley, which I think is about twelve miles long, if I remember rightly, and very extensive, we had an opportunity of more accurately gauging the area of the valley itself, in consequence of a very large fire which had taken place there. I should say that the fire had destroyed over 1,000 acres of the bush; we were consequently enabled to get backwards and forwards through it, and to judge of its character, which we were unanimous in declaring to be some of the finest country we had ever seen. We crossed over another ridge, and then got down into the valley of the Wangamomona River. We started very early in the morning to walk up this valley, and we continued walking over a level country until night, being eleven hours on this journey, and we calculated that we had travelled at least eleven miles, finding the land to be exceptionally rich the whole distance.