

26. The earthworks are being formed?—Yes.

27. Under the co-operative system?—Yes. The line under construction at the present time extends to the south boundary of the Awarua Block. I think the distance is about thirty-two miles from Marton.

28. In the interests of the colony do you not think the further extension of that railway should be stopped until the purchase is completed?—I think it would be a good business investment to erect a viaduct and have a station at the Ohingaiti, and to build a bridge at Otara to induce traffic.

29. Until the purchase is negotiated and completed with the Natives, every mile you advance the railway must enhance the price that they will require to be paid?—They see the earthwork there now, and they know the line will go on sooner or later. I should like to supplement my evidence by stating that south of the Kerioi, for several miles, the line skirts good land. What I wish to convey to the Committee is this: that although the line between Turangarere and Kerioi runs across rather inferior country, directly south and in the near vicinity there is a large area of good land, the traffic from which would feed the line.

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Mr. MORGAN CARKEEK, Authorised Surveyor, sworn and examined.

30. *The Chairman.*] Dr. Newman requested that you might be called early this morning—that you were waiting in Wellington. Will you give the Committee, in brief terms, what information you have bearing upon the prospects of either the central trunk line or the Ngaire line, for the purpose of settlement?—Yes. Starting from Stratford, the first twenty-five miles is through very good country for settlement—good timber, well watered, good soil for sheep and cattle, nice low hills. I have not been there for five or six years, and then there was a good deal of timber suitable for sawing purposes. From that point up to 40 miles, the land is not quite so good, but still fit for settlement purposes. From there to the Tangarakau belt, which would make the distance sixty miles, is the rough part of the line—that is, from the 40 to the 60 miles. It is birch hills and rough country. There is coal there; it cropped out in the bed of the river in large quantity. It was very black, very light, and burned with a white smoke. It is good for camp-fires, and is very similar to the Mokau coal. I should say there is a large deposit of coal there. I have no doubt it is the same coal that runs right through to Mokau. From the distance of 60 miles, the land improves and continues fairly good over to the Ohura. Then up the Ohura River it is a level country. There is a good deal of open country not far away; but the soil is not very good on the open or higher land. In the valley it is fairly good. The line I explored diverged at about seventy-five miles and went through the Mokau, which is a limestone country.

31. We do not wish to restrict your evidence, but, from former inquiry, I think the Committee are pretty well of opinion that the Waitara route is quite out of consideration?—This is not the Waitara route. I am still of opinion that the Ngaire route, if diverted from the 75-mile peg, should be diverted by the Mokau River, and then to the present terminus of the Auckland line. The proposed divergence would take the line through good country; I mean the line as explored by Mr. Holmes and myself.

32. You state, speaking of the valley, that the land would be fit for settlement; would that apply to the land on the hill-tops on that route?—Yes, for the first twenty-five miles. They are better hills than those around Wellington, which I consider very good sheep hills.

33. To what portion of the route would it not apply? How great a portion of that distance is occupied by hills that could not be cultivated?—The hill-tops are not so good as on the first section mentioned, but they would still do for sheep.

34. And beyond that?—The section from the 40-mile peg to the 60-mile peg, the land is good for nothing. The coal deposit is in that distance. The land itself I do not think is of any value.

35. Are there indications of minerals on the country which your proposed divergence would cover?—Yes; I found coal between Ohura and Mokau.

36. Apart from coal, is it what you would consider a mineral country?—I should not think so. I have not had much experience in prospecting for minerals, and should not like to give a definite opinion. The country becomes better, and you get into limestone in the Mokau.

37. What information can you give us regarding the central route?—I have merely travelled through it. I have done no work on it. I have travelled down from Te Kuiti to the Waimarino Plains. I left the line and joined it again near Turangarere. I can give no information about the intervening distance.

38. As to the country between Te Kuiti and Waimarino?—The country at Te Kuiti is very good. It seems to grow crops very well, and also good grass. Soon after leaving Te Kuiti the country becomes very poor, and gets worse all the way down until you reach Taumarunui. From Taumarunui, after crossing the Wanganui River, the country is somewhat better, and there is a valuable totara bush. You get into bush country, and we passed through about seven miles of good totara bush country. I do not think the soil is very good, but it is very hard to judge of its character while the bush is standing on it.

39. Would you expect to find good totara forest on poor land?—Well, strange to say, there was pumice stone close under the surface. I should always say in the Wellington Provincial District that the land was good where I saw totara, matai, and red-pine growing; but I saw some of the trees blown over, and the pumice stone was quite close under the surface, so that I should not like to say that it is good soil.