

9. I understood you to say that if the line were finished to Turangarere that would require another forty miles?—You should remember that twenty-two miles and a half of that is done.

10. The forty miles would be required from the present terminus?—This line will begin at 22½ miles beyond the present terminus. That will drain a very large country—the Inland Patea—which has become a country of great importance. The wool grown there, which now goes along to Napier and other places, if this railway be carried on thirty miles further, will come down here. I would ask the Committee to recommend what we have already asked the Government to do—namely, that they would bridge this Makohine Gorge; that being done, and the railway going up to the 30-mile post, would bring down the whole of the Inland Patea trade. It would bring in the wool from Kerioi. The Committee will see there is a large amount of good land to the east of this railway which will drain into it. All the Crown land is occupied up to the Kawhatau River, which is a tributary of the Rangitikei River.

11. It is all occupied by settlers up to there—up to the Awarua Block?—Yes; Inland Patea is a very large district. It runs back to the Kaimanawa Ranges. That will all drain down to the central line.

12. In other words, Wellington would get the benefit instead of Napier?—As a matter of fact, carrying wool to Napier from Kerioi means £8 a ton. In fact, they scour all their wool because of the cost of carting it. I would like to point out that if the railway were extended to Hautapu there is the finest white-pine forest in all New Zealand there. Nowhere else are the trees so big as in the Hautapu forest.

13. Have you any knowledge of the estimated cost of five miles of progression through the Hautapu Valley?—[*Mr. Blake*: That is beyond 30 miles.]—What I know is that Mr. Rochfort surveyed the whole of this line very loosely. He laid off the line of road at the head of the Hautapu Valley. Since then the Government have cheapened and shortened that road by three or four miles. Instead of thirty miles, it is so much less to Turangarere. They have shortened the grades, lowered the heights, and cheapened the line generally. Before the railway gets to the end of that thirty miles the survey ought to be extended. A detailed survey ought to be made to shorten this piece.

14. Do you think that is practicable?—I know that the road has been considerably cheapened and shortened. At the time Mr. Rochfort's survey was made this was an unknown land. That is nine or ten years ago.

15. *Mr. Blake*.] Have you any notion as to what it rises from the 30 miles? The sections show 700ft. I only point this out to show that you could not shorten that so as to get 1 in 70.—I would like to say, as regards the land, that the Government are in treaty to purchase 100,000 acres of the Awarua Block. A clause in the Bill passed only last night allows the Government to buy. The Natives are quite ready to sell. They have been down here this session about the sale of the land. Within two months after the House rises the Government will probably purchase 100,000 acres of this Awarua Block.

16. *The Chairman*.] But in the interests of the colony you would not advocate any further extension of this railway until after the land has been acquired?—Only the Makohine Gorge: this will take two years to do. I would hesitate as to the rest for a while. The whole of the land on the west, with the exception of the bit from Turangarere to Ohakune, which runs across the edge of the Murimutu Plains, is papa country. Every acre of it will carry sheep—it is, indeed, a large sheep and cattle country.

17. Then you have a good road from Ohakune to Pipiriki?—I was coming to that. All that land is good land with the exception of the bit from Turangarere to Kerioi across the plains.

18. Would not a large portion of it drain into the Wanganui River?—From Turangarere to Ohakune, that is a long way from the river. It will never go near the river. That country will not drain into the Wanganui River, but will drain into the central line.

19. That country about Kerioi?—Yes; and south of it. From Hautapu and Pohunui-a-tane is the southern basis of the western country. The whole lying west of the central route of the Waimarino is a papa and limestone country until you get to the Ruapehu plateau. You will see a place on the map called Raetahi. There is a hill there 2,800ft. in the air. The proof that all this is a limestone country is to be found in the fact that shells are found deposited on the top of that and other hills. The country in the bend of the Wanganui River lying west is a limestone and papa country. The land from Ohakune to Pipiriki north is a good papa country. There have been lately formed at Waimarino four special settlements, all taken up by general settlers. They are all delighted with the land at Ohakune.

20. Are we to understand that you consider the water carriage of the Wanganui River of no value?—I consider that the water carriage from the Wanganui River has been “bulled” (to use a stock-exchange phrase) for the purpose of “bulling” the one steamer that travels up it. It is always subject to droughts, and when they occur the river goes low. Several times the traffic has been broken down from this cause. There has been a good deal of snagging done, and snagging does not always improve the value of a river's capacity for water carriage. Snags form a kind of weir, so that when you remove the weir the line of water runs away and shallows the river. As a matter of fact, the Wanganui River from Pipiriki to Wanganui might do for a certain amount of light traffic, but never for the heavy traffic that must be carried by the central railway. I would like to say that all the Waimarino beyond, say, two or three miles west of the railway-line, is good land, with only the exception of this two or three miles contiguous to the line.

21. Are you speaking from your own knowledge?—Yes; I have been twice there.

22. Then you left the ordinary road-line, and travelled through the Waimarino westward?—No; I have been on a number of heights along the road. You can see across the whole of the Waimarino for a great many miles. In fact, it lies at one's feet; you can see it is all one country by the foliage, by the trees, by the sculpture of the tract.