

23. You are pronouncing upon the quality of the land from a distant view of its character and position?—It lies at one's feet; it is not distant.

24. Well, it is thirty or forty miles across; that is a considerable distance?—I have heard a good deal about it from people who have been all through the eastern side.

25. You are not able to speak from your own knowledge?—I have not been down to Pipiriki. I had to go on from Ohakune to Taumarunui, that is the other edge of the Waimarino. Some of the land from Ohakune to Waimarino, where the train gets up very high, is poor. But when you go up further, you get into an immense totara forest.

26. That is the extreme north, is it not?—No, about fifteen miles; it comes to within a moderate distance from Taumarunui to the southward.

27. The whole length is from sixty-five to one hundred and twenty-five miles; the totara forest is at the north end?—Before you get through, it is chiefly forest. There is an open clearing at Waimarino. Another place, of which I forget the name—Pupuatea. The land in the bend of the Wanganui River is also very good land. There are large Native clearings about there. Then, to take the other side of the line, east of the line from Ohakune: there you are on the edge of the Ruapehu, on the outlying spurs. Ten or twelve miles from there—Ohakune—you reach Waimarino, you come on to the edge of the pumice. In the Waimarino from the line to eastward is poor land.

28. Will you indicate on the map what you consider to be the boundary between the Inland Patea District and the land you are now describing as poor land?—From Turangarere to Kerioi is part. Kerioi is the western limit of it you will see up to Kaimanawa.

29. Is it good land?—I will not venture to say that all this to the north is good, but it will carry sheep. I hold that this country about Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe, and Tongariro will bring as much revenue to the railway as really good land. The large amount of tourist traffic that will go to the hot lakes must prove to be a large source of revenue to the line. We expect not only to have a large tourist traffic, but a sick-people traffic. A coach will be ready to bring them by easy stages from the line to the hot springs. Tokaanu will be to Wellington what Rotorua is to Auckland.

30. Is the country favourable to a coach-road from Waimarino to Tokaanu?—Yes, it is a beautiful road. You branch off to the south of Rotoaira Lake.

31. Where will it run to the south?—Round by the Waikato River to Tokaanu.

32. You are speaking of the road from Waimarino to Tokaanu?—Yes. I may say about this road that we have agitated until we expect this year to get a coach to run from Hunterville to Tokaanu before Christmas.

33. How long do you expect it will take to do the distance?—Two days to start with; one day later on.

34. That would be a distance of 120 miles?—Two days will be ample. I would say that from Taumarunui north to the junction is pumice. The pumice extends some few miles from Taumarunui westward.

35. We have evidence that it extends from eight to ten miles west; and we have also evidence that it extends eight to ten miles west through the north-east portion of the Waimarino Block, which does not appear to accord with the statement you made just now, that the pumice only extended two or three miles west of the railway?—You will see a stream marked on the map, the Retaruke. I understand that that country is all free from pumice.

36. Towards its junction with the Wanganui River?—I would like to say further, that if the central railway is made, the map will show that it will serve the Ohura Valley just as well as the Stratford line would. It will take in nearly the whole of the Ohura Valley district.

37. But the Ngaire line passes through the valley; the central route is some miles away on the other side of a range of hills. Is it not so?—It is a very easy road down the Ohura Valley to the junction.

38. Then the traffic from the Ohura Valley would not be on the direct route of the central line?—It is on that road.

39. If that means it is to travel up the valley to the point of junction, it would be a rather circuitous way of reaching the central line?—It has no other outlet than through the central line. I would like to say a word to the Committee about the settlement on the central line.

40. Before we leave that point: Of course, the traffic from the Ohura Valley could find its way to the central line, but you can hardly contend that it would be equally favourable to the traffic of that country as the Ngaire route?—The country is a narrow valley; you can look down it two or three miles at the outside. The end of it comes to the central line; therefore, the central line taps one end of the Ohura Valley.

41. Which is about thirty miles long apparently; from the upper end, where it is near to the central route, to the lower end, must be at least thirty miles?—I would like to say further, as regards the land from Taumarunui junction on towards Lake Taupo lying to the north, although that is poor land it is intersected with good land. As there is no water-carriage or other road carriage, all that extensive country from Lake Taupo to the railway will drain into the railway. The sections shown operate unfavourably as against the central route.

42. They are both exaggerated, but they are in proportion one to the other?—I would like to say a word to the Committee upon two or three other things. I wish to protest as a Wellington member against any diversion of the moneys that are now in hand. Of course, the total money raised for this purpose is outside of any recommendation the Committee might make to the House.

43. Is not that a subject outside of the province of the inquiry relegated to this Committee?—If you take it as applicable to the money, the balance of the loan which is yet in hand, I think the Wellington members would have the right of protest against diverting that money from the purpose for which it was raised (the construction of the central line) to making the line from Stratford.