

60. Is the Rangitikei River bridged?—The bridge which is to be kept in view: its site is above the Makohine Gorge. All the land is now held in special settlements. If it goes a little further the whole of the traffic will go on to the railway.

61. I want the position of the bridges to fix this matter. If the position of this bridge, which is to be kept in view, is fixed, then it would appear that the extension of the line abreast Otara would meet all requirements; so that ten miles would serve the whole of these people?—Yes; but it would not open Inland Patea.

62. *Mr Rhodes.*] As to the point to which you said you would take the railway: would there be any great expenditure necessary for roads to bring traffic to it?—Generally if you get to Turangarere the roads there are in a very favourable state of progress. The roads there radiate in all directions; that is one reason why we want that as the starting-point.

63. The road traffic would not compete with the railway traffic?—It could not possibly compete with the railway traffic.

64. *The Chairman.*] It would reach a point where several roads converge?—Yes.

Mr. R. W. HOLMES, further examined.

65. *The Chairman.*] In page 13 of the report sent in by you on the 26th of November, 1889, there occurs the following paragraphs: "Owing to the severity of the climate, sites well sheltered on the southern side must be chosen for these habitations, otherwise the occupants may occasionally find themselves snowed up during the winter." And again, "Gardens are at a discount in this country, as only those vegetables will grow that will stand the frost all the year round." The Committee would like to hear from yourself the ground upon which you based the above conclusions?—On my observations during the time I was engaged there.

66. How long were you engaged there?—About fifteen months altogether.

67. *Mr. Blake.*] Were you up there in the winter?—Yes.

68. *Mr. Duncan.*] Were you more than one winter there?—No, I was there only one winter.

69. *The Chairman.*] Have you any reason to suppose that winter was one of exceptional severity?—No, it was a mild winter.

70. And still you felt justified in making those notes?—Yes.

71. Can you give the Committee briefly the facts upon which your observations were made; also, what was the degree of frost you experienced, and whether there was much snow falling?—We had a good deal of trouble with the snow on several occasions; our tents being broken down. Once or twice we had to turn out at night to scrape them down occasionally during snow storms.

72. Have the Natives there much difficulty in growing potatoes?—Yes.

73. How do they manage?—They generally grow them under the shelter of trees on the edge of the bush.

74. What particular part of the route are you referring to?—About sixty miles from Marton junction.

75. Can you state at what altitude that is?—From 2,000ft. to 2,600ft. above the sea.

76. What grounds, then, have you for saying that that was a mild winter?—From what the inhabitants about there informed us while we were there.

77. Are there any other residents there than Natives?—Yes; there are a few Europeans.

78. *Mr. Blake.*] What is the occupation of the Europeans up there—grazing?—There is a man named Adamson there; he does a little grazing. There are white people living in the Moawhango Valley. About ten miles to the east there are a few storekeepers; also shepherds, who are employed by the runholders.

79. *The Chairman.*] On page 2 of your report, speaking of the Hautapu Falls, you say the distance across to Paengaroa in a straight line is 5 miles 42 chains, while the route by the railway is 10 miles 75 chains; so that there is a loss of efficient distance of 50 per cent. Is there no escaping from this position?—We had to go round to get the 1-in-70 grade; we were bound to. [The following is the paragraph referred to: "The net length of the 1-in-70 grade is 9m. 22ch. The distance in a straight line from 0m. 0ch. to 10m. 75ch is 5m. 42ch., so that there is a loss of efficient distance of 5m. 33ch. or 50 per cent."]

80. Could the distance have been materially reduced by adopting the 1-in-50 grade?—Yes; over that distance the line rises 700ft. We had to get in 10 miles of line to rise 700ft. with the 1-in-70 grade.

81. What was the chief error in the survey made by Mr. Rochfort over the same ground?—He just followed round by the Hautapu River and obtained some distance; but the line would not follow the same course owing to the natural features of the country interfering.

82. You mean that it was impracticable?—Yes.

83. On page 10 of your report you say, "It would be a most convenient place for an engine-station," &c. Is there any particular difficulty in getting a convenient place for an engine-station at any other point along the line?—No; but a lighter engine would work the line to Waimarino. [Paragraph referred to: "Also, it will be the most convenient for an engine-station, it being about 61½ miles from Marton Junction, and practically the summit of one section of long and heavy grades."]