

36. That is about one-half?—Yes; and it would be a saving of £1,153,000 as against the central route.

37. *Mr. Duncan.*] With regard to this shorter route from Waitara, and the cheapness to which you refer, does it arise from special facilities for ballasting, or is it on account of the formation of the country?—Chiefly on account of the formation of the country.

38. Do you know anything of the minerals?—There is coal and ironstone; and I was the first to discover the coal. Coal is found through the whole of the Tangarakau district, which is traversed by either route, and from Ohura River across to Taumaranui, and so far down this way across towards the central route.

39. *The Chairman.*] There is coal about six or seven miles west of Taumaranui?—Yes.

40. How far distant from the Wanganui River would that be?—It is on a creek, a tributary of the Wanganui River. I do not know the distance.

41. Is there a large deposit of ironstone?—I could not say, but there is a reef, and it is quite a mineral country on the Tangarakau River. But I would add that the Ngairu line would go seventy-seven miles through Native lands, and the Waitara line would only go twenty miles. The Ngairu route, nearly the whole of it, is through Maori lands. I do not suppose there is more than twenty miles in the Waitara line which would go through Native lands.

42. On the line you have spoken of as being an easy one for railway construction, what would be the worst grades and curves necessary?—Excepting in the Tangarakau River, which is common to both lines, there would be no grades worse than about 1 in 70. With regard to curves, there would be none of them less than about 16 chains radius—the very worst.

Mr. EDWARD METCALF SMITH, M.H.R., further examined.

43. *The Chairman.*] Referring to your former evidence, what further information do you wish to give the Committee?—I do not think there is much more. I would like to state, however, that Mr. Donkin has been engaged by myself and others for several years prospecting this country with a view of discovering minerals, and of proving how it might be utilised with advantage by a railway. I have myself delivered a series of lectures in the district, illustrated by maps, and of course detailing information obtained from explorers and surveyors. What I wish to speak to you more especially on is this: there can be no doubt of it that in a very short time we shall have large industries established in New Plymouth and Waitara, and by taking the railway the coal inland will very materially assist these industries. As has been already pointed out, that if the railway was made from Urenui, the Railway Commissioners would be able to obtain their coal from land belonging to the Government; that is, the coal is on Crown lands. I may say that within the last ten days I have been told the Crown Land Ranger has discovered coal himself at a new place which is much nearer to a point of settlement. I am told that another sample found will be sent down. What the New Plymouth people object to is this: they say that if this line was made from Stratford they would have to go thirty miles back towards Wellington before they branched off.

44. Your objection is, that whether the line to Auckland is by the central route or by the Stratford route, the New Plymouth people will be left out in the cold?—Yes, in either case. We maintain that this route of Mr. Donkin's is the shortest that can be constructed; that it opens up the best land, and land containing the largest amount of mineral, and that it is the cheapest to construct in order to connect the railway system of the North Island. Moreover, the minerals on that route will pay all expenses. From Sentry Hill on to Urenui is all open country.

45. You have not traversed the country which was described by Mr. Donkin?—No; but I have taken evidence from the surveyors who have travelled the country, and settlers, prospectors, and others.

46. Do you say that Mr. Donkin was engaged by the Government to cut that track?—Yes; and he has only just completed it. And then I do not think that he made this quite clear to you: at the northern end of this line it is proposed that if the central line was continued on, that it would go straight across to Taumaranui; but if that was not done then he would run into the top end of the Stratford line. We have never ceased to explore this country since 1884 with a view of the railway being made this way, and the coal found on that land is of the same character as that found at Mokau, which is of a first-class character.

47. *Mr. Mills.*] Have you ever been through the country, Mr. Smith, which Mr. Donkin refers to?—No, never; my information has been obtained from others.

48. *Mr. Carnecross.*] With reference to that coal, Mr. Smith, is it steam coal?—Yes, it is the same as that found at Mokau, which is used and acts well as a first-class steam coal.

49. Is this coal in Crown land?—It is either in Crown land or in land that is being acquired by the Crown, and of that portion which is not yet Crown land there is no difficulty in the purchase. I should like to state that, in talking the matter over with the Railway Commissioners, they are in favour of that being done, in order to get at the coal for railway purposes, and Sir James Hector's map shows that this proposed line goes right through the said coalfield.

Sir JAMES HECTOR, sworn and examined.

50. *The Chairman.*] You are the Government Geologist?—Yes.

51. You were examined before a Committee of the House in 1884 on the subject of the location of a railway to connect the north and south railway systems of this Island?—I was.

52. Have you any further knowledge of the district?—Since that date the country has been further examined by the Geological Department, but by no means completely examined. The further evidence which I have to give is chiefly of a geological character. I have here a sketch geological map giving a good deal more information than before. Since the former date mentioned, I have myself personally examined the Waitotara River, and some of the other parts of the country have also been re-examined. My former survey of the Mokau district in 1878 was verified and extended in 1889 by Mr. Park, who was then one of my assistants. The map I produce shows the boundaries of the different