

9. That the royalty derivable from these forests, if properly conserved, will pay for the line.

10. That these forests will be a perpetual source of revenue.

11. That it will enable the country between these forests and the Wanganui River to be suitably settled, which will otherwise remain to a great extent unproductive.

12. That it will enable the San Francisco mails to reach Wellington and the South Island in the shortest possible time.

98. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] It is stated in reason No. 3 that there are less rises and falls, 1,128 ft. Does that mean you do not go so high by that distance?—No, you attain to a much greater height by the Central route than *via* the Stratford route, but if you add the total rises and falls by the Central route together you have a less total than upon the Stratford route. There is a great difference in the ups and downs.

99. *The Chairman.*] I understand that the difference in haulage between the Central route and the Stratford route would be equal to about eighty miles of extra haulage upon the latter line?—The difference in the way of haulage would be much greater on the Stratford route, for the reason that on the Central line the total rise each way is practically all in one place, and if heavy trains were running the Railway Department would keep an assisting engine at the bottom of each of the two grades to help the trains upwards. But on the Stratford route the grades are distributed over the whole length of the line. The grades on the Central route are no worse than on the line between Dunedin and Christchurch. There are several miles of 1-in-50 grade on that line, and there is nothing worse on the Central route; and that occurs only in one place, and it is a down-hill grade towards Auckland. With that exception, the minimum grade is 1 in 60.

100. *Mr. Field.*] Do you mean to say there are no heavier grades on the Central line than on the Canterbury and Otago line?—No heavier, but there is a greater length, though not so much as might be imagined, and an engine that would be capable of hauling a train five miles up a 1-in-50 grade would also be able to haul it twenty-five miles.

Mr. Blow was thanked for his attendance, and he withdrew.

FRIDAY, 28TH SEPTEMBER, 1900.

Mr. J. W. A. MARCHANT, Chief Surveyor and Commissioner Crown Lands, Wellington, in attendance and examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] At the last meeting of the Committee it was resolved to ask you to be good enough to furnish such information as you can with respect to the area of land suitable for settlement within any reasonable distance of the line, and generally the character and value of the land, its suitability for small settlement, grazing purposes, or otherwise, or with respect to the probable quantity of timber which can be utilised and be tapped by the railway-line?—Perhaps it would be best, in the first instance, to state the fact, doubtless well known to you, that I have already had prepared a statement of the areas, tenures, and values of the lands within twenty-five miles of each side of the line, in accordance, I understand, with a resolution passed by this Committee.

2. If that was prepared it would be in accordance with a resolution of the House, because at the time you prepared that statement the Committee was not in existence?—It was prepared according to instructions issued in July last by the Surveyor-General to an order of the House. I have a copy of the return, but before bringing the items under your notice I may say that I entrusted to Mr. H. J. Lowe, District Surveyor, the compilation of this return. Mr. Lowe has triangulated a great part of the country, and has otherwise been concerned in the subdivision, roading, and valuing the Crown lands. The area of the country of all tenures within the twenty-five miles limit is indicated upon the plan I submit for your inspection, and it is also shown upon this schedule. If you desire me to do so, I will read the items. They are as follows: Crown lands, 620,675 acres, value £318,200; Native, 843,355 acres, value £699,800; leasehold, 190,400 acres, value £396,000.

3. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] Is that leased from the Natives?—No, from the Crown. Freehold, 85,000 acres, value £180,200; Wanganui Harbour Board Endowment, 10,000 acres, value £10,000; State forests, 143,000 acres, value £30,000. This, I may say, only represents the land-value. It does not in any way refer to the value of the timber, which is not included, but will be referred to later on. The next item is: Permanent Education Reserve, 13,243 acres, valued at £18,725; Public Domain, 22,800 acres, value £17,000; National Park, 41,800 acres, value £50,000: I submit for the consideration of the Committee that with such a magnificent position, combining mountain scenery, volcanic country, and natural beauties and thermal springs, it may very well be valued at £50,000. The last item is: Other reserves, 2,135 acres, value £6,444. These are the details relating to the areas of land, and the values placed upon them by Mr. H. J. Lowe, and the Crown Lands Ranger, after careful consideration and inquiry.

4. *The Chairman.*] That is the value of the land exclusive of the timber growing upon it?—Yes.

5. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] Are you aware whether the Government have been in treaty to buy any of that Native land since the return was prepared?—I cannot answer that question. I have no knowledge.

6. The figures you quote relate to the Wellington Land District?—Yes; as shown by this plan.

7. You do not know anything of the Auckland District?—No. I should like to explain that the Murimotu and Rangipo-Waiiau Blocks are held under lease by Messrs. Studholme and another gentleman, and have, to a great extent, been purchased by the Crown, subject to the leases of the gentlemen I have named.

8. *Mr. Hogg.*] About what area is that?—The Murimotu Block comprises 46,801 acres; all but 6,802 acres have been acquired by the Crown. The Rangipo-Waiiau Block comprises 97,616