

137. Do you know about the difficulties of roading in the King-country?—I do.

138. What is your opinion in regard to roading that block? It is typical north Taranaki and King-country land?—Yes. If the road is made alongside the river that will be an excellent way of cutting up the block, because it will tend to bring everybody together; but if the frontage is cut off by the Scenery Preservation Commissioners, that will not hold. I understand it is proposed to make a road on the southern side, and bring it in from some Ohura lands already cut up in the vicinity; and if that is the case the roads will be formed on steep ridges, and eventually I suppose they will come down towards the river. There are streams joining the river which run down obliquely, and the result is that between the stream and the river there is a ridge which cuts off access to the river. So that unless the road is made round the river-side, any road coming in from the back will be cut off from proper communication with the river.

139. Could you give us any idea as to what it would cost per mile for road-formation and metalling in such country?—Metalling is out of the question: there is no metal there. Road-formation will be very costly indeed.

140. It will be very expensive, in your opinion?—Yes. I should not like to undertake even the survey of the road.

141. Do you know the Waitaanga district?—I have never heard of it.

142. It is sixteen miles west of Ohura?—I know where you are speaking of.

143. Do you know the Waitawhena Road?—No, I have not been on that road.

144. What is the distance from the Waitahonga Road or the Waitewhena Road to where the railway is coming? One witness said it was only a matter of three or four miles?—I have a plan of that part of the Taranaki Province, and I specially looked at that place, the communication from this Mokau Block eastwards towards Ohura, and I came to the conclusion that that part of the country was the steepest and wildest and most inhospitable part of the whole block.

145. Have you any knowledge of the distance from there to where the proposed line is going through the Ohura district?—I suppose it would be about ten miles.

146. It is sixteen?—It might be.

147. What is the opinion of the residents of Te Kuiti and the district in regard to the opening of such a block of land as this and other blocks of Maori land throughout the King-country? Has it not been a source of great complaint that these lands were blocking settlement and retarding the progress of the district?—Yes. I consider that the withholding of that block of land from settlement has been a great blow to that district for years, because there is no proper road coming down into that block at all. The main road from Te Kuiti down into it is only a track on a very steep ridge. I have ridden over it. It is along a razor-back ridge.

148. Speaking generally, it would be a source of gratification to the residents of Te Kuiti and the King-country to know that these blocks are being cut up?—It would give access from Te Kuiti to the sea, and bring into cultivation the twenty or thirty miles of land which is now a sort of incubus upon the whole district.

149. With reference to your statement about the coal-seam, are you aware that the London Board of Trade, on the advice of Mr. Foster Brown, sent out one of the best mining experts in Great Britain to report on this particular seam of coal that is on the block in question?—I am not aware of that.

150. The Board of Trade sent out a Mr. Siggers, and paid him £2,000 to report. Are you aware that that was done?—I am not.

151. Are you aware that the report of that mining expert was that it was absolutely impossible to work the coal, owing to deep sinking, and so forth?—I never heard of it.

152. That is the case. In regard to the value of the land—you have a good knowledge of land? You are a practical farmer?—Yes.

153. And a surveyor?—Yes.

154. At what do you place the value of that land—I am not including the subleased land?—I think I told you before that, taking the block as a whole, the unimproved value of the lot would be £1 an acre at the very outside; that is, if it were unencumbered. I take it in this way: If I were asked to pay more than 1s. an acre rent for it I would not do it.

155. *Hon. Sir J. Carroll.*] That is, for certain parts?—For certain parts I would pay more.

156. *The Chairman.*] Excluding the large area of subleased land, which is the best, and over which the company has no rights for twenty-seven years, what value would you place on the broken lands—those lands running up to Panirau and away back?—From 15s. to nothing. The higher part I would not have at a gift. The difficulty with even the better part of the land is the difficulty of access. It will be years before they can make a proper road there. Even if I had that land it would not pay me to cultivate it until roads are made. I should expect to be out of my money for years, and to be at great expense for carting.

157. Did you visit the lime-works?—No. I saw where there was a lime cliff.

158. You have expressed an opinion about that lime?—I only saw it from the steamer. I did not see any beds of lime. I only saw lime of a similar character to that which exists in the district generally—that is, the fringing reefs.

159. You have no knowledge of the quality of the lime?—No, I have not examined it. I presume it is equally good as the lime at Te Kuiti, having about 98 per cent. of carbonate of lime, with a little impurity—iron alone.

160. *Mr. Massey.*] You do not seem to have a very high opinion of the value of this block?—I only judge the property as I find it.

161. I think you said you were acquainted with some of the settlers in the locality?—I called upon Mr. Adam Kelly and at Henderson's place, but he was not there: the manager was there.

162. Did you ever come across a settler there named Jackson?—No, unless that is the man I spoke to.