

1877.  
NEW ZEALAND.

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# HUTT-WAIKANAĒ RAILWAY COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF THE, TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AND EVIDENCE).

*Brought up 22nd October, 1877, and ordered to be printed.*

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## ORDERS OF REFERENCE.

*Extracts from the Journals of the House of Representatives.*

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THURSDAY, THE 9TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1877.

*Ordered*, That a Select Committee, consisting of the Hon. Mr. Ormond, the Hon. Mr. Richardson, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Bunny, Mr. Ballance, Mr. Rolleston, Mr. Reader Wood, and the Mover (three to be a quorum), be appointed to inquire and report to this House upon the suitability for railway construction of a line of road leading from the Upper Hutt to Pahautanui, and from thence by the Horokiwi Valley to Waikanae, with a view to the connection of Wellington with the Foxton and Palmerston Railway by that route; and as to the expediency of an immediate survey of the same. The Committee to have power to call for papers and persons, and to report in a fortnight.—(*Mr. Travers.*)

WEDNESDAY, THE 22ND DAY OF AUGUST, 1877.

*Ordered*, That leave be given to the Hutt-Waikanae Railway Committee to postpone the bringing up their report for fourteen days.—(*Mr. Travers.*)

MONDAY, THE 10TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1877.

*Ordered*, That the Hutt-Waikanae Railway Committee have leave to postpone the bringing up of their report for fourteen days.—(*Mr. Travers.*)

MONDAY, THE 24TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1877.

*Ordered*, That the time for bringing up the report of the Hutt-Waikanae Railway Committee be extended for fourteen days from this date.—(*Mr. Travers.*)

WEDNESDAY, THE 26TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1877.

*Ordered*, That the petition of residents at Foxton (No. 292) be referred to the Hutt-Waikanae Railway Committee.—(*Mr. Kelly.*)

THURSDAY, THE 4TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 1877.

*Ordered*, That the time for bringing up the report of the Hutt-Waikanae Railway Committee be extended for fourteen days.—(*Mr. Travers.*)

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## REPORT.

THE Select Committee appointed to inquire and report to the House upon the suitability for railway construction of a line of road leading from the Upper Hutt to Pahautanui, and from thence by the Horokiwi Valley to Waikanae, with a view to the connection of Wellington with the Foxton and Palmerston Railway by that route; and as to the expediency of an immediate survey for the same, have the honor to report,—

That they have taken a considerable amount of evidence with regard to the matter referred to them, and are satisfied that the proposed line would bring into immediate use a very large extent of rich and valuable land, which must otherwise, for want of communication with Wellington, remain unavailable. The proposed line, moreover, appears to your Committee to offer the shortest route by which the whole of the country on the west coast of the Provincial District of Wellington may be brought into direct communication with the City of Wellington.

That, in the opinion of your Committee, it is expedient that a survey of the line should be made with as little delay as possible, in order to determine whether it affords a practicable route for the construction of the proposed railway.

Your Committee append copies of the minutes of their proceedings in this matter, together with the evidence taken thereon, and beg to recommend that the same be printed.

22nd October, 1877.

W. T. L. TRAVERS,  
Chairman.

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## MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS.

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THURSDAY, 16TH AUGUST, 1877.

The Committee met pursuant to notice at 11 o'clock a.m.

PRESENT :

Mr. Ballance,  
Mr. Bunny,

Hon. Mr. Richardson,  
Mr. Travers.

Order of reference, dated 9th August, was read.

*Resolved*, on the motion of Mr. Bunny, That Mr. Travers do take the chair.

*Resolved*, That the evidence of Mr. J. G. Holdsworth be taken.

Mr. J. G. Holdsworth attended and was examined, and notes of his evidence were taken by the clerk.

Mr. Holdsworth received the thanks of the Committee and withdrew.

Mr. G. A. Beere was examined, and notes of his evidence were taken by the clerk.

The Committee then adjourned until Tuesday, the 21st August, at 11 a.m.

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TUESDAY 21ST AUGUST, 1877.

There being no quorum present the meeting lapsed.

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WEDNESDAY, 22ND AUGUST, 1877.

The Committee met pursuant to notice at 11 o'clock.

PRESENT :

Mr. Travers in the chair.

Mr. Bunny,  
Hon. Mr. Ormond,

Mr. Reader Wood.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

Sir William Fitzherbert attended to give evidence, which was duly taken down by reporter in attendance.

Mr. J. D. Baird attended and gave evidence, which was taken down by reporter.

The Committee then adjourned until Tuesday, 28th August, at 11 o'clock.

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TUESDAY, 28TH AUGUST, 1877.

There being no quorum present the meeting lapsed.

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FRIDAY, 31ST AUGUST, 1877.

The Committee met pursuant to notice at 10.30 o'clock.

PRESENT :

Mr. Travers in the chair.

Mr. Bunny,

Hon. Mr. Richardson.

The minutes of the previous meetings were read and confirmed.

The Chairman stated to the Committee that he had applied for and obtained leave of the House for an extension of the time for fourteen days in which to bring up their report.

Order of reference, dated 22nd August, was read.

Mr. Richard Smith, being in attendance, was examined, and notes of his evidence were taken by the clerk.

The Committee then adjourned.

FRIDAY, 21ST SEPTEMBER, 1877.

The Committee met pursuant to notice at 10.30 o'clock.

PRESENT :

Mr. Travers in the chair.

Mr. Ballance,  
Mr. Bunny,

Hon. Mr. Richardson.  
Mr. Rolleston.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Chairman stated to the Committee that he had applied for and obtained leave from the House for an extension of time for fourteen days in which to bring up their report.

Order of reference, dated 10th September, was read.

*Resolved*, on motion of Mr. Bunny, That the Chairman do apply to the House for a further extension of time for bringing up the report; and that Mr. J. Booth, Native Office, be summoned to attend to give evidence at the next meeting of the Committee, to be called by the Chairman.

The Committee then adjourned.

FRIDAY, 12TH OCTOBER, 1877.

The Committee met pursuant to notice at 10.30.

PRESENT :

Mr. Travers in the chair.

Mr. Ballance,  
Mr. Bunny,

Hon. Mr. Richardson,  
Mr. Rolleston.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The orders of reference, dated 24th and 26th September and 4th October, were read.

Mr. James Booth attended and was examined, his evidence being taken down by the reporter present.

*Resolved*, on motion of Mr. Rolleston,—

That, with a view of ascertaining the suitability for the construction of a line of railway from the Upper Hutt to Pahautanui, and from thence by the Horokiwi Valley to Waikanae, and thence to a connection with the Foxton and Palmerston Railway, it is expedient that an immediate survey should be undertaken.

That the Committee do report accordingly to the House.

The Committee then adjourned.

MONDAY, 22ND OCTOBER, 1877.

The Committee met pursuant to adjournment at 11.30 o'clock.

PRESENT :

Mr. Travers in the chair.

Mr. Bunny,

Mr. Rolleston.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

*Resolved*, on motion of Mr. Rolleston, that the following report be brought up to the House at its next sitting:—

That the Committee have taken a considerable amount of evidence with regard to the matter referred to them, and are satisfied that the proposed line would bring into immediate use a very large extent of rich and valuable land, which must otherwise, for want of communication with Wellington, remain unavailable. The proposed line, moreover, appears to your Committee to offer the shortest route by which the whole of the country on the west coast of the Provincial District of Wellington may be brought into direct communication with the City of Wellington.

That, in the opinion of your Committee, it is expedient that a survey of the line should be made with as little delay as possible, in order to determine whether it affords a practicable route for the construction of the proposed railway.

Your Committee append copies of the minutes of their proceedings in this matter, together with the evidence taken thereon, and beg to recommend that the same be printed.

Read and confirmed, 22nd October, 1877.

## MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

THURSDAY, 16TH AUGUST, 1877.

Mr. J. G. HOLDSWORTH, Commissioner of Crown Lands, examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] You are Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Provincial District of Wellington?—Yes.
2. Are you acquainted with the country lying between Paikakariki and Palmerston?—Yes, generally.
3. Can you state what portions remain in the hands of the Natives?—I cannot.
4. What is the general character and extent of the land between these two points?—436,000 acres, of which about 17,000 have been sold, balance of about 419,000 acres unsold. With regard to character, 250,000 acres are good agricultural land, the remainder, including the western slopes of the Tararua Range, so far as is known, is of good quality, capable of bearing pasture.
5. Is there much timber land?—Nearly two-thirds of total area is timber land.
6. What quality of timber?—Totara, red and white pine, matai, and manuka, all of which are valuable timbers. Matai constitutes a leading feature, but in the Otaki Block a considerable quantity of totara exists.
7. Have you any knowledge of the country between Belmont and Pahautanui?—More or less broken. It is all timbered, and the soil is generally good. The whole of the small-farm block is already taken up, and the intervening land is about to be surveyed and opened for sale.
8. Is the extent of country large beyond Fitzherberton, on the north of the Manawatu, which would be brought into connection with Wellington if proposed railway were constructed?—Yes.
9. Can you state, if means of communication to the south of Manawatu existed, the extent of country which would be opened?—The whole would readily sell, provided means of communication either by railway or road existed.
10. What is the average price at which land would sell?—None below £1 per acre, a great deal at £2 to £6; outside the timbered country a large area of valuable pastoral land exists, the average price of which would be £2 10s., or more if opened up by roads or railways. A considerable demand has been made for land in this block.
11. Do you know population of District of Rangitikei-Manawatu?—No; you would probably get that information from the Registrar-General.

Mr. G. A. BEERE examined.

12. *The Chairman.*] Your name is?—George Armstrong Beere.
13. You are a civil engineer?—Yes.
14. You made a survey from Hayward's to Pahautanui, with the view of constructing a railway?—With the view to construction of a road.
15. Did you examine its suitability for construction of a railway?—I did.
16. Did you report to Mr. Smith, Chairman of the Pahautanui Road Board?—Yes; and report produced is the report.
17. Do you know the line of country from Paikakariki to Fitzherberton?—I have been over it a good deal at the Fitzherberton end and the Wainui end.
18. Have you a general knowledge of the country?—Yes; the flat land is mostly swampy, capable of easy conversion into agricultural land, not deep raupo swamp.
19. If opened by a railway, would land sell readily for settlement?—I am of opinion that it would.
20. At what price would it sell?—From 10s. to £1 per acre.
21. Are you aware of the price of land near Fitzherberton?—Yes; it has fetched very high prices.
22. What extent of land available for settlement would proposed line open up?—The whole country from the foot of Tararua Range is suitable for settlement; in equal portions, agricultural and pastoral.
23. Is the climate good?—Yes; a fair average of the New Zealand climate.
24. Is it well watered?—Yes.
25. Can you state the average value of the land if a railway ran through it, and it was put up in convenient blocks for settlement?—I think £1 per acre.
26. Are you aware of any sales effected in Fitzherberton lately?—Yes.
27. At what price?—Between £4 and £5 per acre.
28. Are roads made there?—No.
29. If opened up by a railway and put up for sale in suitable blocks for settlement, do you consider that land would fetch more than £1 per acre?—I do.
30. Throughout the whole block?—Above three-fourths of it.
31. If it were decided to construct a railway, would it affect the marketable value of land?—Yes; I think the price would at once exceed £1 per acre.
32. *Mr. Ballance.*] Could that portion of land which is of a swampy nature be made available without much outlay of capital?—Swamps of expensive character to drain are not of large extent.
33. Do you know the Kiwitea Block?—I do not, but am familiar with the Douglas Block.
34. Is the land by the side of the projected line of railway equal in quality to the bush land on the Douglas Block?—Yes; it would bring about the same price, if sold.
35. What is your estimation of the value of land in the Douglas Block?—From £3 to £4 per acre.

36. *The Chairman.*] Would the whole of the country referred to be brought into connection with Wellington by the proposed line of railway?—Yes.

37. Could the gradients mentioned in your report on the line from Hayward's to Pahautanui be eased by tunnelling?—Yes, without much additional expense.

38. *Hon. Mr. Richardson.*] To what can you reduce the gradients mentioned in your report—namely, 1 in 30 (section 2)?—No advantage would be gained by reducing the gradient in the neighbourhood of No 2 saddle. I think that the gradient might be reduced to 1 in 40 in the Wainui saddle by putting in a tunnel 20 chains in length.

39. Would that be through rock?—It is all through rock.

40. Would the works be of a heavy nature?—No, they would not.

41. Have you taken sections along the line of proposed railway?—No; merely heights of saddles by aneroid.

42. Would there be a fair supply of ballast between Paikakariki and Palmerston?—Ample.

43. Are you aware of the nature of the subsoil of the swamps?—I believe sandy, but at the surface a rich black soil for some depth.

WEDNESDAY, 22ND AUGUST, 1877.

Mr. J. D. BAIRD examined.

44. *The Chairman.*] Your name is James Daniel Baird?—Yes.

45. You were lately Provincial Engineer for the province?—Yes.

46. As Engineer, I presume you have a general knowledge of the various districts included in the late province?—Yes.

47. Do you know the country lying between Hayward's and the Wainui?—Yes, I have a general knowledge of it. I have never been actually over it.

48. Have you any idea of the elevation of the country between Hayward's and Pahautanui?—The highest point of the saddle would be 500 feet. I gather that from Mr. Beere's report.

49. You have a survey plan of it?—I have.

50. Does the plan show the height of the saddle?—It simply gives the gradient. I have the height in the report forwarded to the Superintendent in 1874. The height of the Wainui saddle is about 1,140 feet.

51. It was given by Mr. Beere at 650 feet?—The height of the saddle between Pahautanui and Wainui is 770 feet; the other saddle is 1,140 feet high.

[At this juncture the examination of Sir William Fitzherbert was proceeded with.]

Mr. BAIRD's examination resumed.

52. *The Chairman.*] I believe you are personally acquainted with the country about Fitzherbert?—Yes.

53. You know the country well?—Yes; I had a large quantity of land there.

54. And that land was cut up for sale?—Yes.

55. And a township formed?—Yes.

56. Can you state what the land in the neighbourhood of the township realized at sale?—From £7 to £10 a quarter of an acre. The sale took place lately in Wellington.

57. Without roads of any kind?—Yes.

58. The land is practically inaccessible at the present time?—Yes.

59. What is the character of the land as regards quality?—The bush land is very good indeed. The open land where the township stands is not so good. Immediately you enter the bush the land is capital.

60. Do you know anything of the character of the forest along the line of country from Waikanae to Manawatu—the character of the timber?—From Wainui over to Horowhenua there is a great deal of fine totara.

61. Any other timbers?—Yes; there is matai, rimu, and pine. The finest totara I have seen in the North Island is about Manawatu, and in a large quantity. I did not explore to any extent, but there appeared to be a considerable supply of timber there. I have heard from the Natives that at Otaki there is much totara.

62. What is the character of the lower slopes?—I do not know.

63. Can you state whether it is birch or pine country?—I think it is pine and tawa. Birch is found higher up the range.

64. You heard Sir William Fitzherbert say there were from 150,000 to 200,000 acres of good land?—Yes; I estimate the strip near Manawatu to be about eight miles broad, and about a mile to be sandy; the rest is very good land. From the coast it appears an isolated range. The proposed route from Wainui to Otaki would go inside the first range and cross Otaki near the present village. The whole of this land is good.

65. Do you know anything of the extent of the population in that neighbourhood?—No, I do not. It is sparsely peopled.

66. Do you know the Akataura line?—No; I only know of it from the surveyors.

67. Do you know anything of the land from Hayward's to Pahautanui?—I only know of it from Mr. Beere's survey.

68. Have you been up Horokiwi Valley?—No, I have not.

69. This plan, I believe, represents the section from Blackey's to Horokiwi?—No; it is simply a traverse from Horokiwi to Wainui. The schoolhouse shown is at Horokiwi. We only commenced the survey at Horokiwi. The gradient appears to be 1 in 36 to a certain point, then 1 in 33, and

comes down to here (place indicated on map) about 1 in 18 or 20. It is level for about 10 chains, then the gradient is 1 in 52.

70. Then, in point of fact, there would be a certain length of tunnel required?—Yes.

71. Mr. Beere thought a tunnel of 4 chains would do. Have you any idea?—No.

72. This level appears, at all events, to be nearly 400 feet below Akatauara?—Yes; but there is a longer lead on the Akatauara.

73. I believe the land between Hayward's and Pahautanui is about to be surveyed into small-farm settlements?—That is about to be done.

74. Do you know the general character of the country?—Yes; about the same as the land in the vicinity of Belmont, and has the same sort of timber growing upon it.

75. Would it be good land when cleared?—Yes.

76. What is the population?—I do not know.

77. What is the general character of the produce of that district?—Timber and general dairy produce.

78. Is there a large quantity of timber there?—There is only one mill working there at present. Some years ago there were two at work.

79. What sort of timber grows there?—Rimu and matai.

80. The country generally is well timbered?—Yes.

81. *Hon. Mr. Ormond.*] You were talking just now of the value of the land, and Mr. Travers has followed up the subject by asking you the general description of it. What is the value of land south of Manawatu? You spoke of town land; will you now speak of the country land generally?—There are some parts in the neighbourhood of Otaki and Horowhenua that could, I think, be sold for £5 or £6 an acre.

82. What do you estimate the general value of the portion included in the 150,000 acres?—I think about £2 an acre if taken up in blocks for settlement. That would be independent of the township.

83. You know the country equally well between Masterton and Woodville. What do you class that land at?—Yes; that land would fetch £2 an acre if cut up in suitable allotments.

84. *The Chairman.*] Is there a large area from Masterton to Woodville in the whole?—Yes. I do not say the whole of the Seventy-Mile Bush would fetch £2 an acre; I am speaking only of the lands near the road. A great deal of the land about Otaki and in the neighbourhood is open country, and would be worth more than bush land in the Forty-Mile Bush. Otherwise the land is just as good.

85. *Hon. Mr. Ormond.*] The advantage of this line is that it would be more direct and less expensive than what is called the main trunk line at present?—Yes.

86. *The Chairman.*] You know the Manawatu Gorge?—Yes.

87. Have you any idea of the expense of a railway through there?—Of course I have never looked at it with the idea of giving an exact estimate, but it would be very expensive.

88. I have, I think, heard it estimated by an engineer at £40,000. That would be very expensive?—Yes.

89. The present bridge would not be used?—No; the line would not cross the Manawatu River at all.

90. Now, all the engineers say that the line could be taken on the north side. It is a mistake. By so doing it would necessitate two bridges being made instead of one. The route would still be available for the ordinary traffic. There must be a road in addition?—That is why I think it would be better to take the railway on the other side.

91. *Hon. Mr. Ormond.*] Looking now, Mr. Baird, to the country north of Manawatu River, also the country north of Woodville, do you think the line such as that talked of here would be preferable to the present main trunk line?—I believe both will be necessary.

92. Suppose you had to choose?—I should say the Forty-Mile Bush line would be the one first required, because the port of Foxton is available for the West Coast trade; the Forty-Mile Bush is comparatively inaccessible, and would be opened up by a line. It would also be a through route to Napier, northwards through the Island.

93. Which route would open up the most country for settlement?—The Forty-Mile Bush road, because along all the other line the greatest portion of the land is in the hands of the Natives.

94. *The Chairman.*] That line would not connect any portion of the West Coast with Wellington?—No.

Sir WILLIAM FITZHERBERT being in attendance gave evidence.

95. *The Chairman.*] You were the late Superintendent of the Province of Wellington?—Yes, I was Superintendent of the province at the time the abolition took place.

96. I believe, Sir William, you are well acquainted with the line of country between Wainui, Featherston, and Palmerston?—If you allow me I will tell you all I know about it. I think in that way such information as I have to give will be more intelligible. I may say that ever since the provincial institutions were established I have, in one capacity or another, had more or less to do with the work of the Province of Wellington. First, under the late Dr. Featherston, who was Superintendent, and latterly as Superintendent myself. It naturally became the duty of the provincial authorities to look at the conformation of the country intrusted to their management, and to see how the best lines of communication could be established throughout it. Reference to any map of the province, such as the one I am now looking at, will show that the natural features of this province are distinguished by a great range dividing it, more or less, into two parts—one on the East, and the other on the West—separating, in fact, the eastern from the western portion. I refer to the Tararua Range. That was the great difficulty which met us from the very first, and which from the outset we recognized and endeavoured to overcome. There was that range and a large tract of forest country separating us from another part of the province at that time. I merely refer to these as the two great obstacles we had to deal with and overcome. It will be seen that dealing with the difficulty of penetrating the range was taken in hand whenever an opportunity presented itself. Accordingly, when there were

funds available for different portions of the colony under "The Loan Appropriation Act, 1863," a memorandum was forwarded to the General Government by the Provincial Government of Wellington, pointing out how the mountain range might be penetrated where it thins out at the Manawatu Gorge, and application was made for funds for that purpose. Subsequent efforts were made to penetrate the range at different points nearer Wellington, and exploring parties were sent out with more or less success during the Superintendency of Dr. Featherston. During my Superintendency these explorations terminated in some success, and I would refer to the report by the Assistant Engineer to the Provincial Engineer, which appears in Appendix B, attached to the Superintendent's speech on opening the 27th session of the Provincial Council in 1874. Mr. W. A. Fitzherbert and Mr. John Barton successfully penetrated through the gorge, and received orders to take such observations as might show whether it was necessary to further prosecute the exploration they had succeeded in making from one coast to another. The report referred to shows the results attained. It was most successful, and subsequent efforts were made to lay out the line so explored. Some expenditure has been made upon it, and the whole result is that a practicable line, not only for an important road but also for a railway line, has been, I believe, discovered. I want to point out now that the result of the investigations pursued by the provincial authorities showed to them that the main road through the North Island, beginning from the Port of Wellington, must be a bifurcated line. The great point under consideration always was where the bifurcation should take place, and also whether there must not be more than one. The first point of bifurcation, in my opinion, must be the point leading into this Hutt-Waikanae line. Connected with this is another most important consideration. There is a tract of country about forty miles in extent, from the Manawatu River to the Waikanae River on one side, and up to the Tararua Range, containing 400,000 or 500,000 acres. I am bound to say, and I believe it is due to the interests of the colony at large to state, that the isolated position of the Port of Wellington, now the metropolis of New Zealand, should not be permitted any longer to continue by having this way barred up, when a practicable line of communication can be established through it and between the East and West Coasts. This block of land is in much the same state of nature as it was when I came to the country some thirty-five years ago. The only difference I see now is that the rivers a traveller had formerly to wade through or depend upon the capricious will of a Native to be crossed over in a canoe have ferries instead. That is the only difference I know of now in travelling along that coast. It is simply travelling on nature's pathway along the beach. Efforts have been made, and I believe, most successfully, for the purchase of the whole of that large block of land by the authorities. The transaction has not been brought to a perfect state of completion, but the negotiations have so far proceeded, and payments to such a large extent have been made, that in reality very little is required to bring the transaction to a close. I point that out because, independently of any other consideration, this is to be looked at as a practical question in connection with this proposed line of communication. If any one will look at the map I hold in my hand, he will see that along the Takatarawana Stream, which runs through the piece of country tinted pink, the track for several miles is through a wooded country—country, although I believe ultimately it will become very valuable for locating people upon, is not such as to command immediate settlement or money from settlers. It is, however, the highway to a tract of country capable of holding a large population, and if negotiations were completed thousands of people might be settled there, and the road would pay for going through the portion of land at present not available for sale. I point out also another important thing, that whenever the Masterton line might be completed further on, we have this difficulty to contend against, of a gradient of 1 in 15; and whenever it should be completed, and the Manawatu Gorge penetrated for some three or four miles, the cost for a railway would be enormous as compared with the average cost of lines in other parts of the country. But even supposing that were not so, if any one will look at the map, it will be seen that, if there be any correctness in the statement I have made, the land from the left bank of the Manawatu River to the Waikanae River could not be tapped by the railway over the Rimutaka range, so as to bring the produce and intercourse of the settlers into connection with the Port of Wellington. It would be valueless over the forty miles of country to which I have referred. This can be easily seen by any one who will look at the map. I thought it my duty to say so much, because I have been intimately connected with this question, and to show the grounds that have for a number of years influenced the provincial authorities in endeavouring to get this work done. I have no hesitation in saying so much.

97. Are you personally aware what the price of land has reached in the Fitzherbert District—that is, at the other end of the district?—I cannot say just now what it has reached to, but I would say any price it has reached to is just about as much in comparison with what it would reach, as to what ten acres could be sold for in Wellington some ten or fifteen years ago, and what the same area would fetch at the present time. I have been over the country on foot in every possible direction. It was my duty to do so, and I gained an intimate knowledge of the country. When I see a tract of land forty miles in extent available for settlement, and so near the metropolis, I cannot understand why it is not opened up. I would point out here that if provincial institutions had not been abolished that line would be in progress now, and the same with regard to the large block of land—it would be in possession and several thousand people would be settled upon it. I say in reply to the question put to me by the Chairman, I believe that there is a great deal—I will not say how much—of this land—you will understand I mean a considerable portion—that would realize from £7 to £8 per acre. I am not speaking of the high artificial prices given at times. Considering the price given elsewhere, I say that this land would pay investors well. I have met the chiefs there, and have gone with them over it, and I believe myself to be a tolerable judge of the land. This district could be brought within two or three hours of Wellington, and within such reach that a long day would enable a settler to come to Wellington, transact his business, and return the same evening.

98. *Hon. Mr. Ormond.*] Would you kindly say, Sir William, where the boundary of the purchased land is, going northwards from Belmont?

*The Chairman:* The purchase made from the Natives?

*Hon. Mr. Ormond:* Yes; the Crown land.

*Sir William Fitzherbert:* There was first a purchase—

99. *Hon. Mr. Ormond.*] I only want to know about the general boundary, if you will kindly give it?—The land purchased from the Natives is about up to Waikanae. Then come the inchoate transactions. The purchased land extends up to the Waikanae.

100. *The Chairman.*] When the inchoate transactions are disposed of, will there be a large quantity of this land open for sale?—It is forest land, very rough and broken, and at the back numerous wide ravines. Here and there may be found spots available for settlement, and ultimately it will be settled upon, but not until a good line is laid down.

101. What is about the distance from Belmont to Waikanae?—About eighteen or nineteen miles.

102. From Waikanae does the estimated distance of available country narrow?—Yes.

103. How far does that extend?—It opens out crescent-shape, and extends to about Ohau. It is not so narrow as may be supposed.

104. Then after we pass say Ohau, the country opens out and continues so to Manawatu?—Yes.

105. And it is really in the neighbourhood of Manawatu that the country is available for a district?—Yes; south of the Manawatu River. South of that river and Otaki there is a great deal of land available.

106. Have you any general idea as to the quantity. The Commissioner of Crown Lands says there are 490,000 acres?—I had this block surveyed, and up to the summit of the range there were from 400,000 to half a million of acres; but I could not say all of that land was available. On the contrary, in my own opinion, the portion that might be called available land, and some of it excellent, is about 150,000 to 200,000 acres. I do not think there is any land in the country superior to it.

107. You spoke just now of the inchoate purchases. Are you aware of the way these lands were passed through the Native Land Court?—In what way?

108. You spoke of the purchases being incomplete, and that they might with due exertion be completed?—Yes; they passed through in very small parcels, and in strips of land, to my mind, in a most incomprehensible manner at the time. Still, I may be excused for saying that there is a good deal of mystery in connection with such matters. I am bound to say a very considerable sum was spent, and it was the primary desire of the Provincial Government to have this land. The Judges said in open Court that they never had a more satisfactory survey of lands submitted to them for investigation.

109. Can you say whether or not the country north of Otaki has passed through the Court in strips several miles in length?—Yes; I would recommend a search being made for the map that was produced before the Court.

110. Do you approve the action taken with respect to acquiring those purchases?—Up to a certain point I do. The thing was left in my hands. There came a time when an officer in the Native Department, who was placed under me, acted in a manner I could not justify, and Sir Donald McLean insisted that he should be removed. By Mr. Booth, who succeeded him, there was a different degree of progress made. The definition of certain reserves remained to be done. Speaking generally, and still quite accurately, I may say that the whole of that land was purchased. I should have to refer to the officer to be able actually to state the particular blocks. In the main there were payments made over the whole of that block, and I believe myself that these, too, have been honest payments—I mean understood by the Natives. Repeated interviews had taken place with them, and they all gave the sale their entire acquiescence.

111. *Hon. Mr. Ormond.*] Perhaps I might get at what I want by saying the purchase of those blocks is in this position: Starting with the knowledge that the land has passed through the Native Land Court in strips, we find then the position of the purchases. Whereas two blocks may be purchased, there may be one or two not bought, and so on right through. The position is this: that although the purchases are considerably advanced towards completion, still there is a large amount of interest not yet acquired. Owing to the unwillingness of the Natives the purchases remain in that state?—I cannot say. The thing was taken out of my hands. I am bound to say that more important things were engaging the attention of those who presided over these matters, but it might have been acquired long ago absolutely. I state that, having had a great deal to do with it. I am sure this is understood that when a large purchase like that is brought up to a sort of white heat, when it is allowed to cool a great many difficulties arise, and I believe that is just the position the matter is in.

112. It is very difficult.—I may say this, that I believe I am quite right, and I ought to say it, that I exercised every influence I had, personal and official, to “choke off”—I believe that is the proper term—all private purchasers, and I did it most successfully. I believe that private purchasers coming into the field is the key to the subsequent complications. Tempting offers were made, and bits were picked out here and there, and every kind of impediment has been thrown in the way. That is the key.

113. I did not hear the whole of your evidence, Sir William. Might I ask did you speak of the other line, what is called the main line?—Yes; what I said was that, whatever way the line was made, more bifurcations than one were required. I believe we have got to penetrate from the east to the west along the Hutt-Waikanae line. Higher up you have also to penetrate at the Manawatu Gorge.

114. Can you give any information as to the relative value of lands that would be opened up by the line from Belmont to Manawatu, and the line from Masterton to Woodville?—From Masterton to Woodville there is a great deal of valuable land. That the Minister for Public Works will know. There is a block standing in the way, containing 62,000 acres, which I hope will be acquired. I believe negotiations have been sufficiently gone on with. There is no doubt that the whole of the country is exceedingly valuable. All the country thereabout is Crown land, except the 62,000 acres.

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FRIDAY, 31ST AUGUST, 1877.

Mr. RICHARD SMITH, Horokiwi Valley, examined.

115. *The Chairman.*] What is your name and occupation?—Richard Smith, Horokiwi Valley, sheep-



farmer. I am a member of the Wellington District Highway Road Board and of the Hutt County Council.

116. Do you know the line of country from Hayward's to Pahautanui, and by Horokiwi to Wainui?—Well.

117. What is the class of land?—Very good. It is a rolling country, heavily timbered with excellent timber.

118. Can you state the value of the land along this line?—Supposing there were roads, if the land were put into the market, it would fetch from £2 10s. to £3 per acre. The timber on the land would pay for the land if it could be got to a market.

119. Do you know the country from Paikakariki to Fitzherbert?—Well.

120. Can you state what is the character of the land?—Chiefly excellent bush land; there is, however, some extent of good open land.

121. What is the class of timber on the land?—A good deal of totara, and plenty of matai, rimu, or red pine, and the other ordinary timber.

122. Is there much tawa bush?—There is, at the back of the Manawatu.

123. What extent of swamp is there on this line?—There is no swamp in the bush land, but outside of it, and between the bush and the coast there is some swamp land.

124. How have you become acquainted with the country?—I have been all through this line of country after cattle. I have known it for years.

125. What is the character of the country on the slopes of the Tararua Range?—Very good land, far better when cleared than the hills between this and Porirua.

126. What is the average width of good land from the foot of the range?—I should say, at a guess, from Otaki about three miles, widening thence to Foxton to fourteen miles.

127. Is there available land along the coast between the bush and the coast?—There is a strip of from three to seven miles inside of the said hills, and it is splendid land.

128. If cut up into blocks of from 50 to 500 acres, what do you think the land you speak of worth?—The general average of bush land would fetch £4 an acre—of course supposing there were roads or railway.

129. *Hon. Mr. Richardson.*] Would roads have to be made, or would line of railway be sufficient?—If the main line were built the settlers would themselves make roads to the line of railway.

130. Could the land you speak of be ploughed?—It could, if cleared and stumped.

131. *The Chairman.*] You know Jenkins's clearing? What is the class of land about there?—It is splendid land. It could be brought under the plough without difficulty.

132. Would the land be soon taken up if there were a line of railway in the district?—I know a great many settlers who would sell out near town at once, and buy land there if the line were made.

133. Would there be any bad rivers to cross on the line of railway?—There would be no difficulty in crossing any of the rivers on the line; the only bad crossing would be at Otaki.

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FRIDAY, 12TH OCTOBER, 1877.

Mr. JAMES BOOTH examined.

134. *The Chairman.*] Your name is James Booth?—Yes.

135. You are in the Native Land Purchase Department?—Yes.

136. Are you acquainted with the condition of the purchases of land on the West Coast, between Waikanae and the Manawatu?—Yes.

137. Can you state what proportion of the land between the two places mentioned has been purchased from the Natives?—I produce a tracing showing the completed purchases. One block here of 4,400 acres has been partly purchased. A reserve is to be made out of it, which will probably take a third, perhaps a fourth of this block.

138. What is the condition of the Horowhenua Block?—The Horowhenua Block of 52,000 acres belongs to another tribe, the Muaupoko. They have not yet consented to the survey being made. There has been a small advance made to one man, a chief, for his personal claim in the higher part of the block, but it amounts only to £64. I have spoken to Major Kemp, the chief of the tribe, and he says he has no objection whatever to the railway running across, but, at the same time, he would require compensation for the land taken. If a station were erected on the block, he would give ten acres. There are five blocks here called the Manawatu-Kukutauaki No. 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, and 2E, on which £970 has been paid, and preliminary deeds have been signed by several of the grantees; but within the last twelve months they have changed their minds and are determined not to sell, or they ask a very exorbitant price—for instance, £1 an acre along the ridge.

139. At present there is very little hope of completing this purchase?—Yes.

140. But the major part of the country may be said to be purchased?—Yes.

141. Do you know the country, Mr. Booth?—I have been eastward a few miles from the coast.

142. Have you a general knowledge of the character of the land?—Yes.

143. Is it good?—Very good; all bush. There is a considerable sprinkling of totara, also rimu and matai.

144. You consider the bush to be good bush land?—Generally, it is good bush land; not heavy.

145. But still good timber land?—Yes.

146. Have you any idea whether the Native owners of the five blocks, Manawatu-Kukutauaki No. 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, and 2E, would object to the construction of a line?—In their present temper I could not say. I have seen Major Kemp this morning, and he says his is all right, and the people south of those blocks, I believe, are all agreeable.

147. There is a portion of these Natives' land which intervenes between Palmerston and Waikanae?—Yes. The line would have to pass through these five blocks.

148. And you do not know whether they would consent to the construction of a line of railway?—No. They are very positive; they will not sell. There are ten grantees in each block, and some have taken advances and signed preliminary deeds; and now they say they were only representatives, and have handed back their responsibility to the outsiders, and the outsiders say they will not sell.

149. What do you think is the value of this land down here [points to map south of the Horowhenua Block], assuming it were put into the market?—If a railway were made through it; I know land down here [points to map] fetches £2 an acre readily—land near the river. Of course as you go higher up it is not so valuable.

150. Has any advance been taken on Ohau 2 and 3?—No; I do not anticipate any difficulty until you reach the No. 5 Block, Manawatu-Kukutumaki No. 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, and 2E.

151. I understand you have reported fully on these various matters, showing the condition of the negotiations?—Yes.

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By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBUY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1877.