

not have been more than 2 or 3 per cent. of the quantity required for this huge embankment, and the risks involved in its construction would have been proportionately greater. Even if an embankment had been possible, the cost of making it and the very large culvert to take the Makohine stream would have been as great as the cost of the present work.

58. *Mr. Hogg.*] The line has been formed to Paengaroa. How much further has it to go to reach the splendid timber?—The Waimarino Forest will be reached first from the Auckland end.

59. How much further will you have to form the line at the Auckland end so that the timber will be available? I cannot at the moment give that exactly; the reason being that the survey of this line is carried on from both ends, and the mileage is not continuous throughout. Without the map to guide me I cannot say exactly how many miles it is from Ongaruhe to the edge of the Waimarino Forest. (After reference to papers.) From Ongaruhe to the bottom of the Waimarino grade is fourteen miles, and to the top forty-seven miles, and the forest lies between these points.

60. What time will elapse before the fourteen miles is constructed?—That is not difficult construction. The fourteen miles is fairly easy, but the section upon which we are engaged at present is rather difficult. I do not think the rails can be laid to Taumaranui in less than two years.

61. *The Chairman.*] What Mr. Hogg wishes to ascertain is when the timber can be made available, but he does not mean specially this forest, but from Paengaroa to Ohakune?

*Mr. Field:* It is sixty miles between Taihape and Waimarino. It is sixty-two miles from Mangaonoho (the end of the present completed railway) to Ohakune.

63. *The Chairman.*] What is the distance from Mangaonoho to Paengaroa?—The length of railway between those places is a little over twenty-eight miles.

64. And from Paengaroa to Ohakune?—Thirty-three miles.

65. That is open country?—Along the Taumaranui Section the work is principally in the bush, but the remainder is comparatively open.

66. What distance would the Taumaranui Section be?—There would be six or seven miles of heavy work. The whole length of the section is nearly eleven miles.

67. Then, if that distance of heavy cutting were completed from the end of that section, from Taumaranui to Ohakune, there will be some of the easiest construction of the whole line?—Yes, it is practically level; but some little grading will have to be done to get down from Waiouru to Karioi.

68. *Mr. Hogg.*] What distance does the line penetrate this forest?—I presume you refer to the Waimarino Forest. About twenty miles.

69. *The Chairman.*] Perhaps Mr. Blow will give the final reply to this question. The object was to ascertain how soon the line will tap the Ohakune Forest? You say it will take two years to complete the Mangaweka Viaduct. How much longer would it take to have the line completed to Ohakune?—I presume you mean if the department were at once instructed to put the work in hand as rapidly as possible: I think another year would probably suffice.

70. You consider it would be three years before the line could be put through to Ohakune?—Yes; quite three years.

71. *Mr. Field.*] And by that time the line would be done from the other end?—I think not; there are some formidable obstacles to be overcome.

72. You think it would be easier to get it through from this end?—Yes; as far as Ohakune.

73. *The Chairman.*] Is the Manganui-o-te-Ao the largest river to be bridged between Paengaroa and Waimarino?—No, that is not the largest bridge; but it is a considerable one. It will consist of two spans of 122 ft. each, on masonry piers 90 ft. high.

74. Have the designs been altered since Mr. Rochefort's time?—Yes; the route has been considerably altered since his survey was made. We adopt his route in the main, of course, but we have improved upon it in detail.

75. Then the idea of diverting the line so as to take it down to Pipiriki you think would be quite impracticable?—Quite impracticable at reasonable cost; and the Waimarino country would not be as well served by that route as by the present route.

76. Of course the lands for settlement we shall get from the Lands Department, and the area of land that will be made available by the construction of the line?—Yes; but I have given you some information on that subject in the booklet which I have furnished you with containing data supplied by the Lands Department.

77. It has been stated by various public men with respect to the North Island Main Trunk Railway, that it passes through "a howling desert," and that the land is absolutely unsuitable for settlement. Have you had any representations to that effect?—If the land has been so described, I think the description is exaggerated. As far as Turangarere, at the south end, the land is of excellent quality. From there to Waiouru it is much lighter, and on the Murimotu Plain it is very light, tussocky country. All of it carries sheep, but exactly how many I am unable to state.

78. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] It might, perhaps, be put this way: How many acres to the sheep?—I believe most of it carries about half a sheep to the acre. The land that is covered with forest is probably carrying the best crop now that it ever will grow, and I should advise that it be continued as forest country. I think the best way to treat it would be either for the Government to act as millers, and to replant the bush as it is cut out, or to let contracts for cutting subject to the condition that the land be replanted by the contractors as the trees are cut out. If this were done the land would continue growing its most suitable crop, and there would be a perpetual source of revenue in freights for the railway.

79. *The Chairman.*] But perhaps you are not aware that the forest land in that locality is very excellent dairy country, and that the dairy established there is a very fine one indeed?—At Raetihi the land is of excellent quality.

80. Immediately you enter the forest the land becomes good?—Yes, it improves.