

suitable generally from an engineering point of view, speaking of the general contour of the country?—On the route you have indicated the first twenty-seven miles would practically be along the present coach-road to Pipiriki, which takes in some of the dairying and grazing lands already described, and a considerable portion of the splendid milling forests about Raetihi. Nearer Pipiriki the country is rougher and more broken, but would, when cleared of the forest, be suitable for sheep-grazing. The alternative line you have indicated would, I presume, necessarily be confined to the Wanganui Valley, or gorges northwards from Pipiriki, thence up the Tongarakau to connect with the proposed Taranaki—Auckland route. I have not been over the country between Pipiriki and the head of the Tongarakau, so that I am unable to speak particularly of the character of the land. The second part of your question refers to the practicability of the route. To deflect the line from Ohakune south-west to Pipiriki would take the line into the Wanganui basin, and appears to me to present no advantage over the Waimarino route, and, if I may venture an opinion, it would bring the railway—if it were found practicable to construct it—along the course of the Wanganui into competition with water-carriage. This route would also have the very grave objection of cutting off the interior country on the east side of Wanganui River from reasonable access to the railway. Leaving out of consideration the capabilities of a great portion of the land for pastoral purposes, the Pipiriki route would avoid altogether the great bulk of the forest country which it is proposed shall be milled at the northern end.

*The Chairman:* After the clear and exhaustive explanation and description which Mr. Marchant has given to the Committee respecting all the questions that have been addressed to him, and the valuable information regarding the North Island Main Trunk line, I move, That this Committee desires to place on record its high appreciation of the careful, able, and exhaustive manner in which Mr. Marchant has given his evidence.

*Mr. Marchant:* In thanking you, Mr. Chairman, for the compliment you have been good enough to pay me, I desire to repeat what I have already endeavoured to bring out—namely, that I am indebted for a great deal of the information I have laid before the Committee to Mr. H. J. Lowe, District Surveyor, Mr. Lundius, Crown Lands Ranger, and other officers of the staff, who have kindly co-operated in compiling the information for the Committee.

*The Chairman:* I move, That the vote of thanks to Mr. Marchant be entered on the minutes of the meeting.

---

LETTER FROM J. W. ELLIS, Otorohanga, N.Z., to J. STEVENS, Esq., M.H.R., Chairman, Main Trunk Railway Committee, Wellington.

DEAR SIR,—

6th October, 1900.

As requested by you I now forward a few notes *re* the country that will be served by the Eastern route from the present terminus of that line at Porootaroa to the Waimarino Plain, a distance of from fifty to sixty miles south from the end of the rails. I know this country well, not only along the main road, but I have been over all the main tracks both on the east and west of the proposed line of railway. Generally the land in the immediate vicinity of the line is poor, pumice country, but it runs almost on the western edge of that class of country, and a very short distance to the west takes you into good country, the bulk of it being of papa formation, which, of course, is grand grass country. I have put about 800 acres of this country into grass on the Ohura River about twenty-five miles from the railway-line, and the result has been most satisfactory; it is surrounded by a huge area of Crown land of equal quality, and it may not be out of place to ask you to draw the attention of the Government to their large estate in this district, and to suggest that as the rails are expected to be laid to Kawakawa inside of a year (where the Ohura Road leaves the Main Trunk Railway), that it would be in the interests of the line to have some at least of this land prepared for settlement at once, so that it could be offered for disposal soon after the line is opened to that station, from where a good dray-road extends thirty miles into the Ohura country.

On the eastern side, while a good deal of the country, especially on the flats, is smothered in pumice, there are large blocks of useful country, more especially about the Pureora and Puketapu Hills, and there is also on this side a good deal of "papa" country, and since I have known it a considerable slice of country on the Taringamutu River has come into good pasture simply by stocking, and without any grass being sown; but the chief value of this side of the line lays in the timber. As a sawmiller I have given particular attention to the timber resources of this part. It is generally believed that the rails will have to be extended some thirty miles before any good milling timber is opened up; this is a mistake. I am quite satisfied that every station south of Parootaroa, with perhaps one exception, will be a large shipping centre for timber, although anyone not acquainted with the country and seeing little timber close to the line may doubt it. The principal timber-trees are rimu, totara, matai, and kahikatea, and they are generally well-grown useful-sized trees; on the Waimarino Block they are extra large on the northern end of the block, and this is one of the finest lots of timber I have seen. As to area, I understand that Mr. Marchant estimates the acreage of good milling timber on the Waimarino Block at 30,000 acres, and I think I am quite safe in saying that the milling timber outside of that block and between it and the Tunnel is of quite equal extent, although most of it lays some distance back from the line, but there is no other outlet for it.

Mr. Holmes, who surveyed that part of the line, told me that he has picked up pieces of coal in the head of the Retaruke River, within two or three miles of the line as located by him, and, as it has long been known that coal existed lower down on the same river, the chances are that there is a large deposit close to the highest part of the line and within a moderate distance of the Taranaki and Wellington markets, to say nothing of its value for railway purposes.