

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