

some study, but I may say there is a difference of forty-eight miles in distance. The distance between Auckland and Wellington by the central route is 432 miles; *via* Ngaire, 480 miles. Were the lines of the same character, it would make a difference of from two hours to three hours in the actual travelling, according to ordinary New Zealand railway speed; but, as I have already pointed out, the grades on the existing open line between Marton and Ngaire are so unfavourable that additional time would be lost on the route, so that the comparison in time of the through journey between Auckland and Wellington is still more in favour of the central route. I should say that between Wellington and Auckland, by the central route, there would be no difficulty in running the through distance in from eighteen to twenty hours. A matter for the Committee to consider is this: that the through traffic would be for a long time only principally in passengers and mails; that there would be comparatively little through traffic in goods. The sea distance between Onehunga and Wellington being only 300 miles, the railway could never attempt to carry goods over 430 miles cheaper than they could be carried by water 300 miles; but, no doubt, in the matter of passengers and mails the railway would have the preference, because even with a fast steamer it would take at least twenty-four or more hours to go from Onehunga to Wellington. To give the Committee some idea of what the through passenger-traffic might be, I may mention that the through daily passenger-traffic between Christchurch and Dunedin, by the express train, including both ways, is about twenty-eight passengers. Of course the same train takes intermediate passengers, horses occasionally, light merchandise, and mails. Further, I should like to say to the Committee that I think it very premature to think of making this railway-line by either route; that what is really wanted for this interior country is a system of summer-roads so as to promote the pastoral occupation of the country; the clearing of bush and other work to be done will require many years to accomplish before settlement becomes of sufficient importance to warrant the construction of a railway for the convenience of settlers.

22. You spoke of the country through the Waimarino Block as being at an altitude of 2,600ft., and fit for pastoral settlement?—Yes.

23. Do you think the altitude excludes it from being occupied for agricultural purposes?—No, I do not. Oats would grow very well up there, and, were the soil sufficiently strong, wheat would also grow at that altitude.

24. *Mr. Blake.*] You have not been up the Ongarue Valley?—I have not been there.

25. *The Chairman.*] What would be the relative proportion of land available on the two routes?—I should say on the central route there would be at least twice as much land rendered available to the railway as on the Ngaire route—I mean the whole length as between the two lines—I mean twice the area of land fit for settlement would be served by the former railway.

26. Can you state approximately what would be the cost of making the grades on the open line between Marton and Eltham as good as the grades that will be secured on the central route?—I have not studied the cost, but the Committee will at once see that it would be a very large sum indeed when I tell them that the Wangapehu, Fordell, and Brunswick grades are several miles in length, with grades 1 in 35 and curves of 5 and 6 chains radius. If the line had to be improved to a grade of 1 in 50, it would mean the construction of an entirely new line by another route.

26A. That is, over a considerable portion of the distance?—Yes.

27. Would it, in your opinion, involve twenty miles of new line?—I believe it would, as there are some other grades nearly as bad which I might have mentioned, but those I have mentioned are sufficient to indicate the nature of the line.

Mr. S. PERCY SMITH, sworn and examined.

28. *The Chairman.*] You are Surveyor-General?—I am.

29. You informed me a few days back that you were having some plans prepared to give information to the Committee as to the quantity of land acquired by the Government; are you now prepared to proceed with your evidence in chief?—Yes, Mr. Chairman, I am. I now produce such a plan as indicated to you the other day.

29A. Would you be kind enough to state to the Committee, as concisely as possible, the area of land in the possession of the Crown, the area in the possession of the Natives, and the area in the hands of private individuals, on the two rival routes; and also state what you know as to the relative quality of those lands?—A map has been prepared to show the two routes—the Stratford route, and the central route, from the points where the two lines diverge to where they would connect with the present-existing railway-lines—that is, from Rangatira, near Hunterville, on the central line, and extending as far as the Mokau Railway-station in the north; and again from the railway-line near Eltham, and join into the main trunk railway-line at a place called Ongarue Valley. In order to get at some means of comparison, I have taken fifteen miles on each side of the two lines, excepting in the case of the eastern side of the central line, where it is manifest a larger extent of country would be served by the railway; in this case the line has been extended for a distance of thirty miles, on the ground that this country for a distance of thirty miles must be served by the central railway. As lines at fifteen miles limit, of course, they are necessarily somewhat arbitrary, and in some cases indeed will include, and others exclude, country which would be served by either of the two lines. As the limit is made the same in both cases, it will equally apply. With regard to the areas and the character of the country, I have myself personal knowledge of the central line—of the whole of it, with the exception of some half-dozen miles. With regard to the other, I can only speak from personal knowledge of the two end portions for short distances, and, consequently, the information which I have given on this map has been derived from various sources—from the best available—from Government surveyors and others. I have given on the map some figures respecting the areas which are affected by the two lines. I will premise what I have to say on the subject