

14. In the estimate which you furnished on the 15th of this month you state the cost from Mangaonoho, 22½ miles north of Marton, to Ongarue will be about £1,283,450: can you say how much has been expended on this central route, in addition to this present estimate of £1,283,450, since the inquiry was held in 1884, on both ends of the line?—At the south end the total expenditure and liabilities to date are £160,878. The other end I have not got, but I will put it in.

15. You understand that I require it from the point of the finished railway when the inquiry was made in 1884?—Yes; the total expenditure at the north end and liabilities to 31st August amount to £266,398.

16. There is a large portion of this central route as to which the information is very incomplete. Now, in the interests of the colony, do you not think it would be advisable to have a little further exploration of the whole of the neighbourhood of this route before the line is located?—Yes, certainly, a good deal of exploration before the line can be properly located.

17. As to the Ngaire route, estimates of which you have furnished, are they based on actual survey?—Yes; the railway-line is not located for construction, but is sufficiently near to admit of accurate estimates being made.

18. You mean surveys that enable you to say that whilst the cost may be less, it is not likely to be more?—Yes. The line is not pegged throughout, but all necessary details for estimating quantities are provided.

19. You have not ascertained either the worst or the best as to the central route?—That is so; it may be better or worse.

20. *Mr. Duncan.*] Does that answer you give cover the whole of the route?—Yes.

21. *Mr. Wright.*] Is there any statement you would like to make to the Committee bearing upon this question?—No, sir, I do not think there is any statement I can make that would enlarge at all upon what has been already reported by Mr. Blair and others.

22. You have no personal knowledge yourself of the central route?—No; except between Te Awamutu and Taumararui at the north end, and from Marton to Hautapu at the south end of the line.

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THURSDAY, 22ND NOVEMBER.

Dr. A. K. NEWMAN, M.H.R., sworn and examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] You are the member for the Hutt District?—Yes.

2. Will you briefly give the Committee such information as you can with reference to the merits of the two railway routes for the North Island Main Trunk Railway? First, have you any knowledge of the Ngaire route?—No, only of the two ends. One great advantage of the central route, as its name implies, is that it does not come into competition anywhere with water carriage, in thus being unlike most of the coastal railways of this colony. The Committee will see that it goes through the widest part of the North Island, and therefore it drains a great breadth of the country. It opens up a very much vaster area than the Stratford route. I should like to put in before the Committee this map [produced], showing the large extent of area drained within twenty miles of the route as compared with that on the Stratford route. Starting from the Marton end of the central route for about fifty miles to Turangarere, and for four or five miles beyond that point, the whole of the land is of first-class quality.

3. Although somewhat rugged?—But, though some of it is rugged, there is a fair proportion of flat land through which the railway runs all the way up. It is all bush country until you get to Turangarere; there it is open country. The whole of the country from the Ruahine Range right across to the bend of the Wanganui River is all the same kind of country: all a papa country. Waimarino, with the exception of the western boundary, is a papa and limestone country. I might say that all the Crown land has been taken and settled as far as the Kawhatau; it is all occupied by settlers on both sides of the line. At Moawhango there is a large amount of Maori settlement. The Maoris there are occupying their land, and run a large quantity of sheep on them.

4. Merinos?—There are a few merinos, but the bulk of them are cross-bred Lincolns now. When you get to Turangarere you arrive at a big district called Inland Patea. It is the country north of Turangarere; it includes part of the Murimutu Plains. The eastern section is first-class land, and the upper Rangitikei, that is a limestone slope. In Inland Patea there are upwards of 250,000 sheep along the line; the whole of that wool, if the railway were pushed on a little bit, would come down along the central line—along the Government line to Wellington.

5. When you say you pushed on a "little bit," what would you have the Committee to understand by that phrase?—The end of the railway work is about nine miles beyond the Makohine Gorge; from the end of the Makohine Gorge to Turangarere is but a small distance. Taking nine miles from the Makohine Gorge, where the unemployed are now at work, to Turangarere, you have the exact number of miles on the map.

6. Then the railway works must be already on Native land?—No.

7. If the works extend nine miles beyond the Makohine Gorge it must be within the boundary of Native land. I should think it would be no more than five miles?—I have been told they were nine miles beyond the gorge.

7A. We wish to be clear about this: as to whether the railway is being constructed on Native land or not. If the works extend nine miles beyond the gorge they must be?—I understand the works are all through on Crown land.

8. And not outside?—I am not aware of it.