

25. I think you said that the question of the line going east or west of the Tangihuas was a matter for the engineers?—Yes.

26. But that in your opinion it should go to the east?—Yes.

27. It is a question for the general public, then?—Yes. We all have a feeling about it.

28. *Mr. Becroft.*] Would you define the districts the proposed central route goes through?—What I mean by the central route, and what we all mean by the central route, is a line from McCarroll's Gap east or west of the Tangihua hills.

29. *The Chairman.*] The central route must go through Mangakahia Valley, on account of the hills and mountains on both east and west?—I think so.

30. You know that if the central route is adopted the railway system between Whangarei and Kawakawa and Hokianga will be connected at Kaikohe?—I understand that that is the proposal.

31. If the connection is made between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap, do you know what extra mileage it will entail those persons in travelling to Auckland?—I cannot give it exactly, but it would be something extra

32. Even if the connection was made between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei the freight would still go from Whangarei?—I think the merchandise, or most of it, would.

33. The passengers would go by railway?—There would be a big passenger trade.

34. What do you base that opinion upon?—Personally, from experience, I would sooner go by rail than by steamer; and I know of many others who would too, to avoid the open water.

35. How long does the steamer take to go to Auckland?—About seven hours.

36. Do you know, approximately, how long the journey to Auckland by rail would take?—About the same.

37. You say that the return second-class fare by steamer is 15s., and with a second-class single fare of 1d. per mile it would be 6s. dearer to go to Auckland by rail from Whangarei than by steamer?—Yes; but for all that, I think the people would prefer to go by rail if they could do so. I think there would be a great passenger traffic.

38. You do not think the Mangakahia route would pay at the present time? Do you know the country between the Mangakahia Valley and the Tangihua Range?—No.

39. Do you know that the population of the Bay of Islands electorate, including Maoris, was twenty thousand five years ago?—I did not know that.

40. Knowing that that population existed five years ago, do you still say that the Mangakahia Valley would not pay on account of the population?—I am surprised to learn that there are twenty thousand in the electorate, to begin with. If there are twenty thousand there, there must be thirty thousand in Whangarei.

41. *Mr. Steadman.*] Do you know that passenger traffic is already being diverted by railway and coach to Whangarei, and on from there to Auckland, in order to avoid the long steamer-trip round Cape Brett?—I think so.

42. They prefer the train and coach to steamer?—Certainly they do; and that is why I think they will continue the train when they come here.

43. *Mr. Becroft.*] What transit facilities are provided and in course of construction to connect the Whangarei-Kawakawa line with steamer traffic?—The line is extended to Grahamtown, and with the extended wharf and deep water no doubt extra facilities will be afforded by the Northern Company, or any other company.

44. Will the time-table fit in with the railway time-table, irrespective of tide?—I expect they would do so.

45. That is the object?—I do not know that; but as a matter of business they would.

46. When the train runs to the terminus the tide will not affect the steamer traffic at all?—I think so. There is a bad part on One-tree Point, but I do not think it would interfere with the passage of steamers.

JOHN DAVID MCKENZIE examined. (No. 2.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, and a member of the Whangarei Harbour Board.

2. Will you make a statement to the Commission?—Generally speaking, I follow Mr. Carruth, in so far that I think the railway should come this side of McCarroll's Gap, that the Main Trunk line should go west of the Tangihua Mountains, and that Whangarei should be connected by a branch off the main line.

3. Is that the same as from the Gap?—From a distance outside the Gap. The two lines should be kept together as far as convenient, and then from the point of divergence the Trunk line should go west, and the branch line should be brought in to Whangarei to connect with the Whangarei-Kawakawa line. The reason I think the main line should go to the west of the Tangihua Mountains is that it would go through a country that is indifferently served now by any means of communication, and it would be the shortest route that the Main Trunk North could take. The reasons I would give for connecting the main line with Whangarei by a branch line would be—(a) that the people who reside in that part of the country have been expecting the railway-line to follow the original survey (Knorpp's line), and have been preparing for a great number of years—arranging the direction of the roads—so as to meet with the long-expected communication; (b) that the people through as far as McCarroll's Gap would in all probability find it cheaper to bring their produce to market by making use of the Port of Whangarei. The third reason would be that I think the main trunk lines of the country should have branches to the principal ports in order to facilitate the defence of the country. Practically the whole of the country lying between McCarroll's Gap and the north, as far as Kawakawa, is a coal-area, and we must defend our coal against the encroachment of an enemy, as well as our other property.