

and the town wharf of Whangarei, but it does not include the wharfage dues, which increase the freight considerably. The freight by the "Ngapuhi," the steamer that carries the goods from Auckland for up-country, is 12s. 6d. a ton to Whangarei. The tonnage entered at the Port of Whangarei, as given in the Year-book for 1909, was 143,934 tons, while for Kaipara Harbour, it was 139,658 tons. For outward traffic for 1909 the tonnage for Whangarei was 86,553, while for Kaipara it was only 9,098.

2. *Mr. Ronayne.*] The Kaipara figures could not possibly include timber?—My figures are taken from the Year-book, and speak for themselves. Mr. Carruth said further that the question of the east or west route was one solely for engineers. I do not think it is, as there are other questions to be considered besides that of construction, such as the population likely to be served by the railway, the quantity of goods likely to be carried, &c. I also disagree with Mr. Carruth's statement that the Trunk line should be as short as possible, as in some cases the shortest possible route would be the dearest and most inconvenient to the people generally. Where the population is thickest the railways ought to be taken, as there they are most likely to pay. If the Trunk line is to take the shortest route, more time would be lost to many in getting from the north to Auckland, in travelling to catch the train, than there would be if you had ten miles more of line to travel by. The conditions at Home are a proof of my contention, and I defy any one to mention any railway in the Old County that terminates other than in a town. There is a railway from Glasgow to Loch Lomond, but there is none throughout the Trossachs, or the country from the Trossachs to the Clyde. In the north of Ireland there is a town at the extremity of the Ards Peninsula of about ten thousand population. A railway goes across the north of that peninsula, and another line goes to Down-Patrick, but there is none from Fortaferry to Newtonard. The people there wanted a light line made through the Ards Peninsula, which is a thickly populated and highly cultivated district, but the authorities would not construct it because they reckoned there was not enough population to support it. Here it is suggested that a railway should be made to Pakotai, a hamlet containing one boardinghouse and a store. In my opinion there is not enough population in that district to support a railway, and will not be for years to come. Three routes are suggested for the railway you are considering—the western route, the eastern route, and a route which, instead of following either the western or the eastern routes, would junction with the Whangarei line by a line from McCarroll's Gap. Mr. Mackenzie confounded the eastern route with the western route. There is this difference: The western route goes to the west of the Tangihua Range, and then goes up the Mangakahia Valley; while the eastern route goes through the Mangakahia Valley, but instead of going to the west of the Tangihua Range, it goes through Waikiekie and Maungakaramea, along the eastern side of that range, and if connected with the existing line, would serve the Town of Whangarei, which is the most populous town in the north, having about three thousand people. The population of the County of Whangarei is seven thousand. The town and county have a population of about ten thousand; while Hobson County, the only other county interested in this question, has, including the Town of Dargaville, about five thousand only. A considerable portion of the five thousand dwell on the western side of Kaipara Harbour, and 1,050 live in the Borough of Dargaville. There are other small hamlets on the western side of the Wairoa River. I submit that all those people, for traffic purposes, should be eliminated from the calculation altogether. Then, again, the Wairoa River itself is a far better highway than any railway likely to be built in New Zealand for years to come. If I lived in Dargaville, and wanted to go to Auckland, I would prefer to take the steamer to Helensville, and then the train to Auckland, to going by railway along the eastern bank of the river. If the line were built to the west, not only is there but a small number of people to be served, but those to the east will be excluded from using it altogether. I think those people who reside in Hobson County to the west of the Tangihuas could be admirably served by putting a short branch line through from McCarroll's Gap. As to the line further north, between the Tangihua Range and the Wairoa River, there is merely a strip of land to be considered, and part of it is deeply flooded during certain seasons of the year. Although open for European settlement for years, it contains now but a scanty population. Another reason why the railway should not go to the west is that the country there is in the hands of large landowners, and is not closely settled, while the land on the eastern side is settled in small areas. I think the eastern route is by far the most preferable, and the line ought to go to the east of the Tangihua Range and up the Mangakahia Valley. The time will come when this valley must be opened up, but it might be done now more cheaply than by making a railway. The whole of the wants of the country could be met by junctioning the present line from Whangarei to Kawakawa with the Trunk line at McCarroll's Gap. This line could for the time being be made a portion of the Main Trunk line, and then the people in the north would be better served, and have a railway twenty years earlier than they are likely to have one if it were continued on by either the eastern or western routes. The following are the statistics for the Hobson and Whangarei Counties for 1909: Cattle—Hobson County, 19,912; Whangarei, 40,046. Horses—Hobson County, 2,255; Whangarei County, 5,273. Grass lands not previously ploughed—Hobson County, 68,987 acres; Whangarei County, 131,072 acres. Dairy cows—Hobson County, 3,288; Whangarei County, 12,573. Butter is chiefly carried by rail, and no doubt the factories would want the quickest facilities for getting the butter to the cool-stores. Hobson County had 156 acres in orchards; Whangarei County, 1,060 acres. In sheep, Hobson County had perhaps 5,000 more sheep than Whangarei County. Having to carry cattle by water is very detrimental to the cattle traffic. I have known of a great number of fat cattle having to be thrown overboard on a voyage to Auckland, while not long ago a flock of sheep shipped at Auckland reached Whangarei almost skeletons. In the case of another flock shipped from Auckland to here, one-third died on the way, and another one-third perished shortly after landing. People will prefer to travel their stock by rail to sending