

ALEXANDER GORDON MACKENZIE examined. (No. 8.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, residing at Otonga. I am Chairman of the Whangarei County Council. I live on the Whangarei-Kawakawa line.

2. Would you make a statement to the Commission?—I think that the Main Trunk line should be connected with the Whangarei-Kawakawa line by way of McCarroll's Gap, as being the best in the interests of the Dominion and of the settlers in the north. In the first place, the settlers of the north would then have communication with the outside world, and it would be years and years before they got it if they had to wait for the central line to be finished. In the second place, by the time the railway is completed to McCarroll's Gap I have no doubt that the other end will be pretty well on to Hokianga, which is close on a hundred miles of railway that the Dominion would save by making the connection here. If the Government wishes to open up the country, there is nothing easier than to run a branch electric line right up from the Whangarei-McCarroll's Gap section to the Mangakahia Valley. By making the connection with the Whangarei-Kawakawa section there is no doubt that it would relieve the local bodies a great deal, and also the settlers. In the winter time the settlers are not able to get their goods to their homesteads, but with the connection here Whangarei would be a distributing centre, and it would relieve not only the ratepayer but the Government a great deal in connection with the roads and bridges, which are not in a good state at the present time, I am sorry to say. There is another point I would like to impress on the Commission: Are two lines run through this narrow peninsula going to pay? We have one line now, which was at one time supposed to be the Main Trunk line of railway to the north; in fact, I believe it was part of Sir Julius Vogel's scheme. It was surveyed then as the Main Trunk line. I believe that is why the line has now been continued down to the present deep-water wharf at Grahamtown; otherwise the line would have gone on the other side of the river, as it should have done.

3. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Your opinion is that there is not sufficient country in this peninsula to enable both the present line and the proposed central line to pay?—That is so.

4. *Mr. Coom.*] What would be the length of this electric line up the Mangakahia Valley?—About thirty miles. They say they can construct such lines for £2,000 per mile.

5. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Can you tell us the distance from the Whangarei-Kawakawa Railway to the coast on the east?—About fifteen miles, as the crow flies, at one portion of it.

6. What would be the distance from the line to the west coast?—I could not say.

7. When you spoke of the peninsula as being narrow, had you in your mind the remark of Mr. Massey when he said that he "came to look for a peninsula and found a continent"?—If he travelled over it he would find it a continent all right.

8. You called it a narrow strip?—I think it is a narrow strip in which to run two railways side by side. They might pay in the course of time, but not in our day.

9. Have you anything to suggest as a means of communication for those who would not be on the line?—Roads to the stations.

10. *Mr. Steadman.*] Do you know the proportion of population on ten miles on either side of the line you advocate compared with a similar area on the western line?—I do not; but I know it is thickly populated on the eastern side compared with the west.

11. Have you been over the country to the west of the line?—I have never been through the Mangakahia Valley, but I have been over most of the western country.

12. *Mr. Becroft.*] What authority have you for the statement that the present line to Grahamtown was made with the intention of joining the section with the main line?—I have no particular authority.

13. You made, I think, the statement that the central route would not be more than ten miles in the interior from the Whangarei-Kawakawa line. Looking on the map, would you still say so, bearing in mind that you say it is thirty miles from Whangarei to Mangakahia?—I did not say in a direct line.

14. How far is it by road from Mangakahia to Whangarei?—I do not know the distance, but I believe it is twenty-eight miles.

15. Have you travelled through the Mangakahia to Kaikohe?—No.

16. You have not seen what land lies between Mangakahia and Tutamoe?—No.

CHARLES ERNEST RANDOLF MACKESY examined. (No. 9.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—I am a resident of Whangarei. I am a land agent and farmer. I should like to say that my evidence is off my own bat. I know the country fairly well, and I give evidence in support of the greatest good to the greatest number in the shortest time. I believe that once you pass the gorge beyond Parakao in the Mangakahia Valley it would hardly pay at the present time to put a railway through, on account of the scarcity of settlers. It is always better that the country to be opened up by railways should be agricultural country. That country is under heavy bush, and will be sparsely settled for a long time to come. Later on perhaps it could be easily served by an electric line. In looking over the Railways Statement I find that it is not always the best land that gives the best returns to the railway. Although there is good land on the Dargaville-Kaihu line, that line only pays 1s. 6d. per cent., whereas the Whangarei line, which is running through poor country, is paying £9 6s. per cent. It is paying that now. I find that the Gisborne line, which has the same distance of railway as Whangarei, has only given a return of £2 9s. 3d. per cent., and, if I mistake not, the line is running through most excellent country. Although the Whangarei line is now paying £9 6s. per cent., I believe that that return will shortly be cut down by reason of the extra mileage that is shortly to be added. The added revenue will not be in proportion to that at present being derived over the shorter line from the coalfields. There are, however, other coalfields to be opened up, and also