

the other hand, in the computation of these statistics the railway-line between Kaihu and Dargaville was treated as an inconsiderable quantity, therefore it is only just that the straight line through the centre should be taken in computing the eastern population and other statistics, because Dargaville is a water-way. The same remark applies to this side as far as Whangarei is concerned, and if you make the connection with McCarroll's Gap, you then make it end at Whangarei, and do away with the injustice in regard to the element of computation I have indicated. Electrical power will probably before long be installed in the district, leading to the establishment of large industries in this town. I refer to the power obtainable from the Wairua Falls. Although the outlet of the Mangakahia Valley by way of the river is from Hobson County, its trade naturally falls into Whangarei.

2. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What is the membership of the Railway League embracing the north?—It has had no meeting for pretty well a year, and I do not know that it is an operative quantity. When I went into these matters the league was an active body. Mr. Harding was then president, and I was the secretary. He represented the western side, and I to some extent the eastern.

3. You made the statement that the North Auckland Railway League—so-called—was representative of the north of Auckland?—At the time I refer to it was.

4. What was their membership on the western side?—A very large one. I think the meetings were attended by ten at least. Mr. Harding on one occasion sent me a list of seven members.

5. But did they attend the meetings?—I would not say anything excepting that Mr. Harding attended, and Mr. Alfred Harding also attended, and some gentlemen around Whangarei.

6. Was there not at the same time another league, the Kaipara Railway League, which had no communication with your league?—I think they were coexisting at the same time.

7. I understand that your information of the western part of the Tangihua district was gained when you were an Inspector of Schools?—Yes.

8. Are there any schools on the eastern side of the river?—Not below Tangiteroria. I have not been on the actual western route, excepting as far as Waikiekie. I visited Paradise School on the west side of the river, and always journeyed to it along the eastern bank of the Wairoa to about where the line will cross. I was then ferried across, so that I know that country well.

9. *The Chairman.*] You stated that making the connection with Whangarei would give the northern people connection with Auckland ten years earlier than they would have it by way of the Main Trunk line?—Probably ten years. By the construction of the twenty-seven miles junctioning between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei there would be in actual construction a saving of thirty-three miles, and that would take probably some ten years to do.

10. You know, of course, that the vote for the North Auckland Main Trunk line is £100,000 a year, enabling them to carry out between fourteen and fifteen miles a year?—I am very glad to hear it. In that case the line should reach Whangarei in two years.

11. Yes; and in two years to Kaikohe, if the twenty-seven miles in question were added to the Main Trunk. Is that not so?—I think that is a hopeful estimate. I still consider that on the other ground—namely, of the population lying to the eastward, and in Whangarei County, and in Whangarei itself—that junction should be made.

PATRICK JOSEPH MULHERN examined. (No. 12.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am a farmer at Mangakahia, but I reside at Whangarei. I know the country pretty well through to Hokianga, and indorse Mr. Purdie's remarks in reference to distances, as there were some erroneous statements made respecting that matter. As to the western central route, the twenty-seven miles of construction that has been referred to as required in order to bring the line to here would carry the railway well into the Bay of Islands and the Hokianga district, as the central western route runs parallel with four counties. In my opinion, it would be impracticable to get to this line from Mangakahia without coming into Whangarei itself, a distance of thirty-five miles. The twenty-seven miles of construction to McCarroll's Gap would put a railway right into Hokianga and Bay of Islands, and a similar distance would connect it up with Kaikohe. And there is a large area of country on the western side of the western route which would be served—practically to the head of the present Kaihu Valley Railway, and the head of the Awakino Valley, and the whole of the Tangowahine Settlement. Also the whole of the Maungaru Block and the whole of the Karaka Block, south of that, the country lying down the Aratapu, on that side of the river, would also be served by the western route. I refer to Mitatai. Also, all the country along the Mangakahia, known as Tutamoe Survey District, would be served by that route. Several large blocks of land have been taken up there, including Houto and Tutamoe Settlements; also the country connecting with the Waimatanui, and along the valley of the Mangakahia towards Taheke. All this country would be served by the western route. It is all good grazing-country, carrying from two and a half to three sheep to the acre; and a lot of it is already being utilized for dairying purposes, six wagon-loads of cream coming from there now per week. On the right-hand side of the Mangakahia River the whole of the Hikurangi Valley would be served by this railway; also a lot of Native blocks which adjoin the Nukatawhiti Block. To bring these lands into communication with the railway between Whangarei and Kawakawa would be practically impossible without coming to Whangarei itself. As to the reported sales of stock at Whangarei, it may have been sold in Whangarei, but it was all gathered in Hokianga, Bay of Islands, and Hobson districts, and then sold and taken from here. The country along the proposed eastern route would hardly feed grasshoppers. Statistics were compiled some two years ago in connection with the proposed division of the county boundaries, which indicated the large amount of trade done in connection with the Mangakahia Valley, and why that portion of Hobson County should not be ceded to Marsden County. It was at that