

time called the "big Whangarei steal." Hobson County agreed to the proposal, and allowed the portion referred to to go into Marsden County. I am in that portion which it was desired should be added to Whangarei; so that I am unbiassed on the subject. I consider that the people on the Kaihu side would have as much right to get a connection with the Main Trunk line as the people of Whangarei would, because then they would get a direct outlet to Auckland. If the Main Trunk line were constructed through the western route Whangarei could be connected with that route, and also Kaihu. By the time the line gets to Mangakahia Valley I fancy the place will be far enough advanced to cause the line to pay handsomely. As to the statement that after floods the cows have been found 20 ft. up in the trees, those trees must have been lying on the ground for the cows to get into the branches. As to the utilization of the Wairua Falls for industries, there are falls up the Mangakahia district between 300 ft. and 400 ft. high. These falls are situated in the Nukutawhiti Block.

2. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Where do you consider is the best place to connect the Kaihu Valley Railway with the Main Trunk line?—Somewhere near to Kirikopuni.

3. I think it is quite clear that the greater portion of Whangarei County would be better served by the route you suggest?—A great part would.

4. And you still maintain that it would be impossible for that portion of Whangarei County to connect with Kawakawa except by going to Whangarei itself?—Yes, except by going the other way to Kaikohe.

5. *Mr. Steadman.*] Would more than one-tenth of Whangarei County be served by the railway you refer to?—It could be.

6. Is there not only a small bit of country up there at Tangiteroria and Tangihua that would be served?—It is served.

7. Is that not on the edge of the county?—The railway-line runs between the four counties.

8. Well, how much of the Whangarei County would be served by the line?—I could not tell you, but there must be a part of each county served. There is a big extent of country to be served.

9. Do you advance as a sound proposition that water carriage is more expensive than railway carriage?—On the Wairoa side I say it is; on this side, the eastern, it is much cheaper.

10. Why is it more expensive on the Wairoa side?—Because the goods have to be taken by water first and railed afterwards.

11. What distance is it from Dargaville to Helensville?—I cannot say, but the freight is £1 12s. 6d. a ton from Auckland to Tangiteroria.

12. What is the distance the goods are carried by water in that case?—Eighty or a hundred miles.

13. How much by railway?—Thirty-six miles.

14. On which side of the river is the Tangawahine Settlement that you say would be served?—On the Dargaville side, and fifteen miles from Dargaville. That is the side the railway is going on.

15. What side is the Awakino Settlement on?—On the same side.

16. *Mr. Becroft.*] What do you advocate in lieu of the connection with Whangarei?—The thirty-five miles I speak of would carry you into so much fertile country.

17. *The Chairman.*] If the rate of progress on the Main Trunk line were not interfered with, would you be opposed to a branch line to connect Whangarei with the Main Trunk line?—No.

18. But your chief concern is that the central arterial line should be pushed on with all speed?—Yes.

19. Without any branches?—Yes.

20. But they might go on so long as the Main Trunk line was not interfered with?—Yes.

KAWAKAWA, SATURDAY, 15TH APRIL, 1911.

WILLIAM STEWART examined. (No. 13.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer and sawmiller at Kawakawa.

2. You have been occupied in most of the commercial pursuits for the past twenty years?—Yes.

3. Would you make a statement to the Commission giving your views on the question of railway construction, dealing with a central route, either east or west of the Tangihua Range, and the connecting of the isolated sections of line between Whangarei and Kawakawa and between Dargaville and Kaihu with the main line?—I consider there should be no delay in the construction of the Main Trunk line. That line should proceed by the shortest route from McCarroll's Gap to its destination at the far north. The products to be carried from the far north will be fat stock, cream, butter, early vegetables, and all the passengers. The far north does not care whether the line goes east or west of the Tangihua Range, so long as the most direct route is taken. I consider that connecting-lines should be made without delay between the Main Trunk line and the isolated system of railways on the east between Whangarei and Kawakawa, and on the west between Dargaville and Kaihu. I feel confident that when this is done, and a suitable time-table is issued, the lines will become paying propositions.

4. *Mr. Evans.*] Have you been over this country?—A good deal of it: I have been to Papanui and Matakohē; and, of course, I am acquainted with Maungaturoto, Waipu, McCarroll's Gap, and Waikīkie.