

3. *Mr. Coom.*] Would not the most direct route for the far north be by way of Kaikohe down the Mangakahia, without going round by Whangarei?—I should say that the most direct route ultimately will be the central route, but we do not want to wait for that, as it will be years and years in coming. It is of far more importance to get communication with Auckland, without waiting for the Main Trunk.

4. Do you think it advisable to make a connection with Whangarei for the use of the people in the far north, which will eventually be abandoned by them in favour of the more direct route?—Yes, because the connection between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap will always be wanted. I feel sure that even when the other connection is made the Whangarei Railway will pay handsomely.

5. Why?—Because of the timber and coal. There is an enormous extent of timber on the line yet.

6. Is not all the coal being carried on the line now from Hikurangi?—Yes, but there will be more.

7. Do you suppose that the coal now being carried from Hikurangi to Whangarei, and being shipped there for Auckland, will be carried over the rail to Auckland?—No, I do not think so.

8. The railway from Whangarei to McCarroll's Gap and on to Auckland would not benefit by the coal traffic at all?—Not to Auckland.

9. Why do you suppose the coal traffic would be diverted at Whangarei and brought elsewhere?—The mail-boats, by calling at Bay of Islands, would coal at Opua Wharf, and land mails and passengers while they coaled.

10. You are only dealing with mail-boats, not the general consumption of coal?—Mail-boats, and possibly men-of-war.

11. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Do you know anything of the country between Rakatau and Parakao?—Yes.

12. Do you agree with a witness who said that it would be wise to construct the line as far as Parakao and go no further, because of the expense?—No, the main line should be pushed right through.

13. There are no difficulties between Parakao and Rakatau?—There are no engineering difficulties.

14. Do you agree with the last witness, who said that all passengers would go direct to Auckland by railway rather than by ocean?—I think that nine-tenths of them would.

15. If the direct route was made, passengers from the far north would not go by way of Kawakawa and Whangarei?—No; but that is a very long time to look forward to.

16. That would make a great difference to Whangarei and Kawakawa?—No; I do not think it would be a matter of very great importance.

17. Is there a large country to open up on the central route which it will pay the Dominion to develop?—Yes; it would pay handsomely. There is some splendid country there.

18. Do you think it wise to delay the development of that country whilst the twenty-seven miles between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap should be constructed?—I do not think there should be any delay. I should be very sorry to see the Main Trunk line delayed in order that the other work should go on.

19. You do not want the branch line to Whangarei to be made at the expense of the other line?—Not in any way.

20. If the two cannot be made, which would you prefer?—I should prefer the connection with Auckland first. It may be a selfish point of view, but it would be of the greatest assistance to the Bay of Islands County generally.

21. You would have that first, even at the expense of the other?—I should be inclined to, looking at it from a local point of view.

22. *Mr. Steadman.*] Would not the connection between Whangarei and the Main Trunk line give the people in the centre of the island a chance of using this coal instead of hauling it from Waikato?—Yes, certainly.

23. That coal would go that way instead of being hauled the other way?—Yes, and at a much cheaper cost to the people.

24. Do you know that a portion of this connecting-line between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap would also be used for the purpose of the Main Trunk line?—No; I do not know the country.

25. *The Chairman.*] If you were assured that it would take two years and a half to make the connection with Whangarei from the main line and five years to connect the main line with Kaikohe by the central route, which would you prefer to see pushed on?—The one between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap.

HARRY LONG examined. (No. 15.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, residing at Tanekaha, near Hikurangi. I wrote the Minister of Mines the following letter on the 26th January, 1911, with reference to coal-deposits on my land:—

"Tanekaha, 26th January, 1911.—The Hon. the Minister of Public Works.—In view of the pending inquiry concerning the route of the Main Trunk Railway north of Auckland, allow me to call your attention to the strong indications of valuable coal-deposits existing in the Wairua Valley, between Hikurangi and Tanekaha or Jordan. The matter seems to me of great importance as concerning the best route of the line to junction the Main Trunk to the present Grahamtown to Opua line. Coal of a superior quality to any yet worked in the north has been found on both sides of the valley. In both cases the boring has been done near the hills, about three miles apart. The total area of the flat is over 20,000 acres, all being probably coal-bearing, and nearly all Crown lands, or held under L.I.P. Hoping this brief statement may be sufficient to show the need for further inquiry.—I have, &c., HARRY LONG, Tanekaha."