

20. In spite of the water facilities the freight still goes across country?—Yes.
21. Are the roads better over there than here?—Yes.
22. It is a matter of roads?—Yes.
23. What do you think would be the effect of the direct route?—It would open up the country.
24. Where would you get the timber from for these new settlers?—There is plenty of timber along the line, especially in the Mangakahia district.
25. You think sawmills would spring up there then?—I think so, unless it is cut down before the line is opened.
26. Do you not think that some of the Bay of Islands traffic would go to the nearest ports?—Yes, but that away from the river would go by railway.
27. Is there not a great deal of this land held by Maoris?—Yes: in this county about one-third of the whole area.
28. What is the quality of the Native land?—Very good.
29. What is the extent of the European holdings?—A year or two ago I went very closely into the matter, and found that in this county about one-third of the land was held by the Crown, one-third by the Natives, and one-third privately, mostly in small holdings.
30. What land will a line from Kaikohe to Hokianga go through?—Mostly Native.
31. Do you think the Government should acquire that land before putting the railway through?—Yes, I do. I think the Government should acquire all the surplus Native lands.
32. And the European land too, if any?—Yes.
33. *Mr. Steadman.*] How far have you been over this line?—I came from Auckland to Kaikohe along the proposed western route.
34. Do you know the district to the east intimately?—No.
35. If freezing-works were established at the Bay of Islands, do you think cattle from here would be sent to Auckland?—That depends on the market.
36. As a commercial man, do you think there would be that difference in the price at the freezing-works at Bay of Islands and Auckland to warrant sending stock to Auckland by train?—No, I should not think so.
37. Or if the freezing-works were at Whangarei?—No; I think that if freezing-works were established at any particular point they ought to give as good a price for the stock as could be obtained in Auckland.
38. Do you know the country to the east and west of the road you came through from Auckland to Kaikohe?—No.
39. You do not know whether it is good, bad, or indifferent?—No. The country I came through was good.
40. Is there any extent of timber land in the Mangakahia Valley?—Most of the kauri has been cut, but there is a fair quantity of pine and totara.
41. Would not your butter go to the Bay of Islands if there was sufficient to warrant the steamer calling?—Yes.
42. *The Chairman.*] What is the export of cattle from this district?—Between one thousand and two thousand head were shipped last year by steamer to Onehunga, but owing to the knocking about the fat stock received it was found to be not very profitable. I presume it would be the same if the stock had to be transhipped from rail to steamer at Whangarei.
43. Were these cattle freezers or stores?—Mostly stores.

ERNEST McLEOD examined. (No. 17.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am Clerk and Treasurer of the Hokianga County Council, and until recently was also Engineer for the county. I have lived in the north for thirty-seven or thirty-eight years. I may say I am thoroughly conversant with all the counties north of Auckland. Twenty-seven years ago I rode to Auckland by way of Whangarei, and I was struck with the poorness of the east coast generally. I think it would be better to confine my remarks to the country between McCarroll's Gap to Pakotai. Pakotai is the southern extremity of the Hokianga County. It is also about the centre of the island. Residents generally, when this discussion of the eastern and western line took place, said it was immaterial to them until it got into the Hokianga County at Pakotai, and from there they want the line to go direct north. If we take a line from Pakotai to Ruakokopu, and a radius of ten miles on each side which would be immediately benefited, there is an area of 120,000 acres, and as near as I can make out 30,000 acres of Native land. From Ruakokopu to Kaikohe there are 90,000 acres in a radius of ten miles, which is the richest land in the North Island. About 70,000 acres of that is Native land. There is a tremendous amount of milling-timber on it. I should have mentioned that from the Waoku Plateau you will see that the natural inclination of the land is to the east. From Kaikohe, going west, a very easy line could be made to Taheke. The distance is about ten miles, and there are no engineering difficulties. There is deep water there three hours before and three hours after high tide. Between Kaikohe and Horeke, the most direct route north, there are 70,000 acres. Horeke has the poorest description of land, and that grows *Paspalum* as well as the richest land. Between the Waihou River to Mangamuka there are 80,000 acres. There is also a large area of Crown land which once held kauri, and is still called a forest reserve, but is all available for settlement. From Mangamuka to Maungataniwha you might safely say that there are 100,000 acres that would be tapped. Broadwood, which lies immediately to the north of here, would be connected with Mangamuka by a road which is going through the Karae Block. That is a sketch going through the Hokianga County in the most direct line, which would affect Mangonui, and be most beneficial to us. For many years the Main Trunk line has been talked of as going through the centre of the island, and the engineers in the past realized