

3. You are not considering the question of whether the line should go to the east or the west of the Tangihuas?—No.

4. *Mr. Coom.*] Have you any knowledge of suitable country being found for a connection between the Kaihu Railway and the main line?—No, I do not know that part of the country at all.

5. *Mr. Evans.*] Is the trouble here that you have no money available for roads?—There are a thousand square miles in this county, and the European population is under three thousand. The rating is on the unimproved value. The Maoris have one-third of the land, the Government have about one-third, and private owners have about one-third.

6. What is the rate?—I think, 3d. in the pound.

7. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What is the Native population?—Between two thousand and two thousand five hundred.

8. Are there any engineering difficulties in the construction of a railway through the Mangakahia Valley?—No. About three miles from Kaikohe the country rises pretty suddenly.

ALFRED COOKE YARBOROUGH examined. (No. 19.)

1. *The Chairman.*] How long have you resided in Hokianga?—About thirty-nine years.

2. What is your occupation?—I am a timber and gum merchant.

3. Would you give your views upon the question of railway-extension in the north?—I really do not know the district at the other end of the Mangakahia, but I know a little of the district between here and Kaipara. I have not been down the centre of the Island from Kaikohe.

4. Which would suit this part of the country—the central line, through the Mangakahia to pick up the railway by the shortest route, or to have a branch to connect with the Whangarei-Kawakawa line, and so give a route by way of Kawakawa?—I think there is no doubt whatever that the country would be best suited with the central route, but we look upon it that the Whangarei connection is of the utmost importance to this part of the country, because it would be nearer completion five years hence than the other would be likely to be.

5. Do you know the difference in distance between the southern connection and the most direct central route?—I do not, but I should think that the route by Whangarei would be very much longer.

6. You have land to the north of here, in the Broadwood district?—Yes.

7. You have worked the land?—Yes.

8. What class of land have you found it to be?—Excellent land.

9. Is the land fairly good through there?—Yes. There is a strip of a mile and a half through the country that is not good, but all the rest is very good indeed. It will feed two sheep and a half to the acre.

10. *Mr. Evans.*] Will it carry a beast to the acre?—It will fatten a beast to 3½ acres, on surface-sown grass, that is, fit for the Auckland market.

11. *The Chairman.*] What is your market at the present time for fat stock?—Generally speaking, at present it is Whangarei or the east coast. We have shipped cattle to Auckland, but it was not satisfactory. The southern part of the district sends a good deal of stock over to Kaipara.

12. Do you know what happens to the stock after getting to Whangarei or Kaipara?—They are sent by scow on to Auckland.

13. Ultimately the market is Auckland?—Yes.

14. Have you a regular market for fat stock?—There is always a keen demand for it.

15. Have you any idea of the number of stock that go out of the district in the year?—Last year, some two thousand head went out.

16. What state would the fat cattle be in when they got to Whangarei?—They would go off a little, but it is only five days' driving. The trouble is that from the time you move them off the run it would take over a week, and for that reason we look to the railway as being the principal means of carrying stock.

17. Have you any other remarks?—I think this is one of the finest districts in New Zealand. We consider that it is far in advance of what the Waikato was immediately before the railway was put in. I include in that statement the Bay of Islands, Hokianga, and Mangonui.

18. *Mr. Evans.*] Which do you think you most want, railways or roads?—Railways, undoubtedly. We cannot get population without the railway. They talk about the far north, and will not come up to see whether it is good or not.

19. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Are you aware that the central route is thirty miles shorter than the proposed route from Whangarei to McCarroll's Gap?—I have no doubt that the central route would be the shorter.

20. You would prefer to see the piece of line between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap constructed immediately in preference to having the central route made?—If we had the choice between the two routes, central or Whangarei, we should prefer the Whangarei connection, because we would get it earlier.

21. *Mr. Coom.*] What were the freight charges between here and Onehunga?—12s. 6d. per head freight, and 3s. 6d. wharfage.

22. Supposing it was a question of one connection by railway with this district, by Whangarei or the main line, which would you prefer?—The central route would be the best for the north generally, but for this particular part I think the Whangarei connection would suit us best. The stock is the main thing we have to consider.