

24. *Mr. Becroft.*] What are the products, apart from agriculture?—Fruits in abundance in the Hokianga district. There is no better fruit grown in the country.

25. Are you supplied by local farmers with products, such as potatoes?—A great many were supplied, but we had to import all the same. It is all a Native district at present, but as soon as the land passes into the hands of Europeans no doubt we shall have potatoes to meet our own needs.

26. You think the railway will help to develop the country?—Certainly.

27. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Is there an output of maize from this district?—It is good maize country, and grain-growing country too. What we want is settlers.

28. Is the Mangakahia a good district, and capable of carrying a large population?—Yes.

29. Is it well settled?—There could be a great many more. There is any amount of good land and timber there yet.

30. It is urged that you could get a quicker connection by continuing the Whangarei line to McCarroll's Gap, but if that distance is added to the main line the central route would be thirty miles farther ahead and the Mangakahia Valley brought in touch with the line?—It would be better than the Whangarei line for the settlers.

31. How far have you to go from Kaikohe before you get into the Mangakahia Valley?—It is twelve to fifteen miles before Nukutawhiti is reached.

32. Have you been in any other parts of the Dominion?—I have visited them.

33. Do you think that the north is as capable of sustaining a railway as other parts of the Dominion?—Undoubtedly.

34. Do you think that the north will carry a large population in the future?—I am sure of it.

35. In making a railway, what do you think should be the purposes served—the opening-up of the country and the settling of it?—Certainly. If the Main Trunk is made it will open up the country and develop it.

36. *Mr. Evans.*] Do you grow any potatoes for your own use?—The Maoris do, but unfortunately, owing to the blight in the last four years, there has not been sufficient for local supplies.

37. Do you import maize too?—No, we have a sufficient quantity now.

38. What would there be to export at the present time, if the railway were here, in addition to cattle and butter?—Timber. There is a lot of timber that is not get-at-able from the rivers. White-pine cannot be put into the water, and would go by the railway. There would be butter, fruit, and timber to go at the present time, and potatoes and maize would be sent without any doubt.

39. Suppose you had the fruit to-morrow, could you get a market for it?—If we could get through to Auckland there is a market there at once.

40. Is there not fruit in Auckland already?—Yes, and the population is getting bigger all the time. There is also flax to send out, but the market of late has been very bad.

41. At the present time there is no export except of butter and stock?—That is so.

42. How much butter is exported?—I do not know, but there are several factories now exporting to Auckland.

43. *Mr. Becroft.*] Is the reason for the unproductiveness of this good land because the land is locked up?—Because it is in the hands of the Maori.

44. It is not only because of want of railway communication?—No, it is because it is locked up in the hands of the Natives.

45. You have been here for thirty years: have they grown wheat with any success?—Yes, this land grows beautiful wheat. There was a mill at Waimate, where we used to crush good wheat, and if there was railway communication, the same as in the south, there would be any amount of wheat grown here.

46. Nearly all the products of the land can be produced here?—Yes.

47. *Mr. Steadman.*] What port do you import your goods through?—Opua.

48. Would you import your goods over the Main Trunk line?—That would depend on the cost.

49. You know what you are paying for railage to Opua: would you pay that over the Main Trunk or get your goods still from Opua?—We would not have to pay so much on the Main Trunk.

50. Do you think the Main Trunk can compete with the carriage of goods to the Bay of Islands by steamer?—I do. Water carriage, as we all know, is the cheapest, but you must understand that we have twenty-one miles of rail between here and Opua.

51. Yes, but there are 140 other miles of railage by the Main Trunk: do you think that a steamer running eighty miles from Auckland could compete with a railway of 140 miles: is that a mercantile experience?—No, but it has to be remembered that the goods coming by steamer have to be transhipped into the train. If the through rate from Auckland was at the same rate as we are now paying from Opua, to rail through would be very expensive. I have been told that the heavy charge on the Opua line is because the line is not paying.

52. Will you say to the Commission that you believe you will use the Main Trunk to carry your goods to Kaikohe instead of the steamer to Opua?—I would take the railway even if the railway was dearer, because of the convenience, but I would not take it if there was a great difference in cost.

53. *The Chairman.*] Do you have much loss in the extra handling entailed between railway and steamer?—With kerosene usually there is a loss—out of twenty-five cases usually three or four would have nothing in them. I cannot say that that is caused by the steamer, but we know that the steamers knock about goods a good deal.

54. The extra safety of handling by the railway would be a consideration?—Certainly.

55. How does your freight stand you here in Kaikohe landed at the store?—£2 10s. per ton from Auckland. That is for produce, and for case goods it is a little more.