

37. What would be the effect on Mangakahia if they had a railway to carry their butter to Auckland for 12s. 2d. per ton?—It would mean the addition of two or three factories—perhaps half a dozen—in the course of three or four years.

38. Is there anything that this part of Auckland cannot produce that is produced in other parts of the province?—Nothing.

39. What is the yield of maize per acre in this district?—I have no idea. There has never been any large area under maize here.

40. Would you credit the statement by a settler at Mangamuka that he grew 100 bushels to the acre?—Yes, on some of these river-flats.

41. Are there many sheep in this part of Hokianga?—Yes.

42. Are they likely to increase much?—Yes.

43. Along the line of the central route?—Yes, right through: they will multiply very rapidly.

44. There will be the carriage of sheep into this district and of fat sheep out?—Yes, and wool and lambs in addition.

45. The export would be immensely increased in a short time?—Nothing can prevent it.

46. Do you agree with Mr. Dickeson with regard to the benefits the railway would give to Mangakahia?—Yes.

DARGAVILLE, SATURDAY, 22ND APRIL, 1911.

HORACE HAMMOND examined. (No. 22.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am Engineer for the Hobson County. With regard to the two routes, I consider the western route is the shorter and more direct of the two. The western route does not deviate so much from the direct line between the two fixed points, McCarroll's Gap and Mangakahia, as the eastern route. The western route deviates about three miles from the direct way, as against five miles by the eastern route. The western route crosses the Wairoa River where it is navigable at Kirikopuni. At that point the river is not subject to heavy flooding. A bridge constructed 30 ft. above high-water mark, which is the same height as our heavy-traffic bridge, and two miles by straight line farther up the river, would not impede the navigation of the river. That part of the river is only traversed by small steamers. Where the eastern route crosses the rivers above the junction it crosses the Wairua and Mangakahia Rivers. The Mangakahia River at the place of crossing is subject to heavy flooding. I consider the western route is more central than the eastern route, the western route being twelve miles from the Wairoa River opposite Te Kopuru in a straight line, and sixteen miles from the Wairoa River, opposite Raupo. The eastern route is only six miles from navigable water at Mangapai, a branch river of the Whangarei Harbour. The land through which the western route traverses is all of good class, undulating to flats, while the eastern route traverses a considerable area of poor gum land covered with ti-tree. The western country requires developing, being at present held in large blocks, including some 12,000 acres of Crown land. The area of land affected by the western route will carry a large population when once open for settlement, which would be a considerable factor in finding traffic for the railway. The country affected by the eastern route is already practically developed so far as the land is suitable for development. It is already provided with harbours, and is fairly roaded, and will prove a very small factor in feeding the railway. We have a railway from Dargaville to Kaihu, which could be easily linked with the western route by three possible lines—one is from Taita through to Mangakahia, south of Pakotai, a distance of fourteen miles in a straight line; the second and better route is from Dargaville to Kirikopuni, where the western route crosses the Wairoa River, a distance of eleven miles in a straight line, but which will take about thirteen miles of railway. It is all good country. The Dargaville-Kaihu section could also be linked up from opposite Dargaville to Omano. That distance is also eleven miles in a straight line, and I do not think more than twelve miles of railway would be required by that route. To link Dargaville with the eastern route would be a very expensive matter, and would necessitate a very much longer line of railway. I understand there has been a suggestion that the eastern route should be adopted and linked up with the Whangarei and Kawakawa Railway, and to abandon the central trunk line altogether. If such a thing happens it will only make Whangarei the distributing centre. It will not feed the Main Trunk line. Whangarei Harbour is a splendid port, and linking up the Main Trunk Railway with the Whangarei Railway will simply bring the traffic into Whangarei instead of feeding the Main Trunk.

2. *Mr. Coom.*] If you have a bridge 30 ft. above high-water mark the approaches must be very considerable?—In this case they will be short. The high bank on one side comes right to the water, and on the other side it is only a chain or two before the high lands are reached.

3. Do you consider it will be expensive to construct a bridge on the Mangakahia River, which is subject to floods?—I think so.

4. You say the eastern route at one part is six miles from navigable water at Mangapai: if you look a little farther north to where the river diverges to the east, there is a large extent of country to the east of the central route: how would that be served?—I understand it is all well roaded into Whangarei and into the Whangarei-Kawakawa Railway.

5. Would not the Ruatangata district be served better by the eastern than by the western route?—Undoubtedly it would, but I would qualify that by saying that is only a small piece of