

that Whangarei at the present time has the largest cattle-sales in the north; but I would ask you to remember that Whangarei does not supply the cattle that fill the yards, but only a small percentage of them. The great majority of the cattle that go to the Whangarei sales come from the far north and from around Mangakahia. The whole of the country through which the central route travels sends cattle into the Whangarei sales every month, so that if we had direct railway communication to Auckland it is only reasonable to say that the stock that is now going into Whangarei would go direct by railway to Auckland. Along with that, the railway would also catch all the stock that at present has to go down the river by Helensville. I have not traversed all the eastern line, but I have traversed the whole of the western route from McCarroll's Gap, and I can say that practically every acre of the land is good, and that west of the Tangihua country there is land that cannot be beaten in the Dominion.

3. *Mr. Coom.*] What is the cost of shipping stock to Auckland from the river?—I cannot say.

4. There is a fixed rate?—Certainly.

5. Do you suppose that if the railway were in competition with the river boats on the west coast the rates would be maintained at the present high position?—One thing I think that helps to maintain the present high position is the railway rates to Helensville. What makes our freights so high is that we have steamer freights and also railway freights on top. We have to pay first the railway freight and then the steamer freight, whereas on the east coast they have direct communication from port to port.

6. Do you think the rates on the river would still be maintained as now if the steamers were running in opposition to the railway?—Possibly not. We have had competition on the Wairoa before. At one time we could get to Helensville and back for 1s. Possibly the rates would be again reduced if there was competition with the railway.

7. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Is it not the extra handling of stock because of the steamer and train having to be used that makes the present carriage of stock costly?—Yes.

8. Have you had any experience of shipping stock yourself?—No.

9. Do you know whether there is any delay in connecting the steamer with the train? Have you to paddock, and who has to pay?—I take it that the owner of the stock has to pay all expenses. It is a common thing to paddock stock at Helensville.

10. That has not been taken into consideration by you in estimating the freight?—No.

11. Did your Council not have a conference with the Maungakaramea settlers, in which the question of freights came up?—Yes. A few weeks ago my Council went up to the far eastern corner of this county, which is not a great distance away from where the eastern route passes along. We had £1,000 to expend on roadwork, and my Council wanted to expend that money between those properties and the Wairoa River. The settlers said that they wanted the money spent between them and the east coast, because, as they said, they were an equal distance between Mangapai and Tangiteroria, and the freight to Tangiteroria was £1 15s., whilst to Mangapai they could get scow rates for 5s. and steamer rates 7s. 6d. a ton.

12. Did they also give you the cost of carting between Mangapai and Maungakaramea?—No, I do not think so. They cart themselves.

13. Did those settlers not give you an estimate or statement of the cost of goods from Helensville *via* Tangiteroria to Maungakaramea?—I do not remember it.

14. You have spoken of the deep-water connection: is there not a lot of southern produce consumed by the people on the western route?—Practically all the grain, flour, and potatoes that come into the Wairoa come from the south.

15. How do they come from the south?—Usually by the timber-traders.

16. Would a connection with deep water facilitate the distribution of produce along the line, and create considerable railway revenue?—I should say so.

17. That is, inward as well as outward traffic?—Yes.

18. It was urged in one part that the most important connection to open up railway communication was that from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei, twenty-seven miles: have you any idea where twenty-seven miles added on to the railway from McCarroll's Gap on this route would bring you?—I cannot say.

19. If you found that twenty-seven miles from McCarroll's Gap would take you across the Wairoa River and two miles into Kirikopuni, what would be the effect on the railway revenue of such a connection?—I am not prepared at the moment to say what the position regarding the revenue would be, but I am prepared to say that twenty-seven miles on this route would open up a lot of Crown land, whereas on the other side it would be opening up private land.

20. Which would pay the Dominion better, twenty-seven miles of line from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei or twenty-seven miles of railway from McCarroll's Gap towards Kirikopuni?—The latter.

21. You have not been through to the Mangakahia?—Yes.

22. How near to Mangakahia would two miles in from Kirikopuni bring you?—About eight miles and a half from the centre of the Mangakahia district.

23. I assume that that twenty-eight miles would bring the Mangakahia settlers within eight miles of railway communication with Auckland?—Yes.

24. Have they roads to connect with that railway?—They have roads formed, but not running all the way through.

25. The settlers would be within fairly easy connection with the railway?—Yes.

26. Have you any idea of the extent of country settled at Mangakahia?—No.

27. Have you been through from Mangakahia to Kaikohe?—No.

28. *Mr. Steadman.*] I suppose if the western route is adopted settlers who are on the east would have to go to the west to it—that is, north of the Tangihua Range?—Yes.

29. If you adopt the eastern line, settlers to the west would have to go to the east?—Yes.