

10. You think if the railway was continued the timber would make it pay?—It would almost immediately the three miles extension is put in, because it taps timber not at present available.
11. How long will it take to put the timber land into grass?—It is simply a matter of population. There is no difficulty attached to land here that is not met with anywhere else.
12. How long does it take to bring land into grass?—One year.
13. Can you get a burn right away?—I have fallen bush up to Christmas and burnt it in March. We have no timber that will not burn. The bulk of it is rata and taraire.
14. I understand that people have to go for years without getting a burn?—I have been here for fifteen years, and have never failed to get a burn.
15. In any case, you can get land into grass in two years?—I do not know of any country between here and Taheke that cannot be put into grass in two years, and carry two sheep to the acre then.
16. What are the principal exports from Dargaville to Auckland?—They are practically confined to wool, butter, cheese, pork, and fruit. The fruit export is very little at present.
17. Have you any idea of the butter exported from Dargaville?—I have not the exact figures. I should also have said that there is a large export of kauri-gum, but probably that cannot be considered as produce.
18. *Mr. Ronayne.*] I should like to get some information regarding the freight of £2 which you say you have to pay on goods from Auckland to Dargaville. Could you give the Commission some idea as to how the freight is computed, what the railway charges are, and what the steamer charges are, the wharfages, and so on?—I think the principal goods come under Class A in the railway schedule. The freight is £1 5s. from Auckland to Helensville, and about 12s. 6d. or 13s. on the Kaipara Steamship Company's boats.
19. You are conversant with the system of railway charging: what will Class B be?—That would probably come to about £1 10s.
20. Flour?—We are getting very little flour from Auckland. We get it from the south.
21. Wire?—The freight on wire would probably come under Class B. There is only manure that comes in under the £1 10s. heading to the district. Manures are a little lighter, and I think it applies to all fertilizers.
22. Galvanized iron?—The same rate applies.
23. You say there is very fertile land along the Kaihu Valley Railway?—Yes.
24. Is there a good road between Dargaville and Kaihu?—No.
25. That means that all the traffic has to go by railway?—That is so.
26. You also stated in your evidence that some two years ago that railway was one of the best paying in the Dominion, and that it was mainly due to the timber crop?—That is so.
27. What will eventuate when the timber crop is gone from the extension?—I might tell you that during the last four years fully 6,000 acres of land have been put into grass in my immediate district, and people are going in for wool and dairying. I might also say that all the land is practically locked up from seven miles out of Kaihu. It is called Crown reserve, and is not available for settlement. Practically the whole of the western side of the Tutamoe is locked up.
28. You referred to 32,000 acres of land near Dargaville: how would the railway serve that?—The Kaihu Valley Railway goes right through it.
29. Where do those settlers reside who pay 4s. per hundredweight in winter time: how far from the railway?—Some four miles, some twenty miles.
30. How would the railway serve them?—It would bring their goods cheaper to Kaihu. I do not think it would assist them in getting between the railway and their land.
31. It means that if these settlers have reasonably good roads to connect them with the railway their freight rates would be reduced 50 per cent.?—They would be materially reduced.
32. Are there not coal-deposits, to your knowledge, on the western route, or adjacent to it?—I have only heard of them.
33. You say that the Dargaville district is a large consumer of Newcastle coal: do you import coal from the west coast or from the Auckland district?—Very little comes in coal-vessels from the south, and we get very little from Auckland.
34. Is it not a fact that timber-vessels trading to Sydney bring coal freights back at a low rate?—That is the Newcastle coal I am speaking about. I cannot say it is a low rate, but it competes favourably with anything we get from Auckland.
35. What is the cost of Newcastle coal here, approximately?—I could not say exactly.
36. Would you indorse the statement that it is 16s. a ton?—No, I would not.
37. You have no idea what the cost is at Helensville?—No.
38. *Mr. Coom.*] You gave us an estimate of the life of a forest in this district as ninety years before the whole forest is worked out: do you refer to the Main Trunk forests or only to the Waipoua Forest?—I mean the forests generally from Dargaville north.
39. You suggested that if the Main Trunk were constructed to Kirikopuni that would be all that would be required in the immediate present?—For the immediate neighbourhood of the watershed of the west coast. Immediately you come to Mangakahia you are tapping another country, that is out of touch with this district altogether.
40. Why should Mangakahia not be given a railway?—I did not say that it should not. I said that the railway from Mangakahia to Kirikopuni would serve the Dominion in a better way than by extending the railway from McCarroll's Gap to Mangakahia.
41. Taking into account the country north of Kirikopuni away to Kaikohe, and the country north to Hokianga, how is that to be served, in your opinion, if not by the Main Trunk line?—I quite see that the Main Trunk line would serve those people. The question is, Can the Main Trunk line get there before the other one? I understand that the Whangarei line is authorized from Kawakawa to deep water.