

be different, because it is a magnificent district from the dairying point of view. The Wairoa River here is only good for intercommunication, but as far as communication with Auckland is concerned it has no real value, on account of the freights. The tract of country I refer to is a considerable distance inland, towards the foot of the Tangihuas. Then, again, there are some points in a central direction in regard to which the same remarks will apply. Where you have a railway-line the cream can be brought in from any direction for considerably less than we have to pay when you employ horses to pack it, or wagons, as the case may be. The same applies to other produce. For instance, in the case of butter, if you put it into an insulated truck it is all right, but if the truck is not insulated there is no chance of getting it to market in a fit condition. Sixty miles from here to Helensville is the distance you have to carry it by sea for transhipment, and then it goes another forty miles to Auckland. Over that distance there is no local control, and you have to depend upon the people who are carrying it to look after it. If the railway were within touch of the district, of course that difficulty would be overcome. As far as dairying is concerned, this district is such a good one that, instead of exporting about 300 tons, which is the amount shipped over the railway this season—I include butter and cheese—it would mean about 1,000 tons. If the country is thoroughly developed, according to Mr. Cuddie, Chief Dairy Commissioner to the Government, there is nothing to prevent it being one of the largest exporters in the whole Dominion. Another industry in which we are interested is the production of pork. We have no freezing-works or bacon-factories here, and, even if we had them, we could not get rid of the product under present conditions. We cannot get to the large boats that come over the bar, and the only way we have for getting rid of our produce is to depend upon the railway. The freight-charge upon pork sent to Auckland is $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per pound to put it into the freezing-works in Auckland, and I consider that that rate is absurd. Then, it is not only a question of freight-charges, but there is a difficulty in getting pork into the market in a fit condition. You cannot strike the best time to send it to the city; but if we had the railway to the producer's place we would know that when we placed the pork on the train, say, on a Monday, it would arrive at the freezing-works in time. I estimate that we are at present rearing about two thousand pigs, and that figure would be largely augmented if we had quick and regular communication with the city. So far as the quality of the land in this district is concerned, we have, like other places, poor land as well as good. That remark applies to the land all over the north, and also to east as well as west. A lot of this country is now being taken up and grassed with paspalum, &c. Another matter is that by taking the centre of the peninsula as the route it will greatly facilitate the metalling of the roads. Here we have not got metal as they have in the south, all over the country. We have it only in patches, and in some places it costs from about 12s. to £1 a yard to put it on the road. There is no doubt that with a line up the centre of the country the roads will be much benefited, and those roads will feed the railway. The great drawback in the past has been our not being able to get metal on the ground at a reasonable price, and for many years here from the Wairoa we have been looking forward to the day when we would have a railway to lessen the cost of that.

3. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Which route do you call the central?—To the west of the Tangihuas. I am an advocate of that route.

4. Would you be in favour of a line being built between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei in preference to the central route?—I do not know anything about that route.

5. Is it not a fact that a large number of launches are in use bringing cream to the factories from great distances?—I was referring to the carriage between here and Auckland. I said that water carriage was used locally.

6. Is not butter sent *via* Helensville to Auckland?—Yes.

7. What distance is the cream carried by road, on pack-horses or otherwise, to the factory you refer to, or by launch?—We are bringing it almost from where the central line would be at great cost, and the cream is very much deteriorated in quality. We are bringing it twelve or fifteen miles from the river, in an easterly direction.

8. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] You could not carry for twenty miles of this distance, because of the want of roads, I understand?—Probably.

9. Can you give the Commission an idea of the growth of the dairying industry during the last three or four years?—It has been increasing at the rate of about 32 per cent. up to this year; and if we had better communication I think we would do a great deal better than that.

10. *Mr. Steadman.*] How is the route you mentioned going to bring the cream into Dargaville?—I do not say it would bring it to Dargaville.

11. You say it would increase your supply?—It will bring it from north and south to Kirikopuni.

12. And then it will come down the river?—It might not. There might be a factory established there. It is quite likely that there would be.

13. Is the Waikiekie Factory competing with you for cream to the west of the line?—No.

14. You take the cream from the same district?—It is not affecting us.

15. *Mr. Becroft.*] Is it not a fact that they have no provision for carrying butter in the present steam service?—We are not altogether complaining about the freights, but of the knocking-about that the produce receives, and the fact that it is detrimental in its effect upon the butter. You lose a point for a dirty box. You might put the butter into a clean cart, but by the time it arrives at the factory it is so knocked about that you lose on the shipment. If there were a factory at the North Cape the butter being sent by sea could be delivered at the Auckland wharf 50 per cent. cheaper than we can deliver it at from here. I sent down to Auckland twenty pigs, dressed, running about 2,064 lb. They cost me £2 5s. in freights for the lot.

16. You could send more than that alive at that rate, could you not?—Yes, but we have not got facilities for shipping them.