

1911.

NEW ZEALAND.

NORTH AUCKLAND RAILWAY

(REPORT OF COMMISSION ON THE), TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AND EVIDENCE.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

COMMISSION.

ISLINGTON, Governor.

To all to whom these presents shall come, and to Vernon Herbert Reed, of Kawakawa, M.P., solicitor; Lewis Philip Becroft, of Port Albert, J.P., farmer; John Coom, of Remuera, Auckland, civil engineer; William Evans, of Timaru, J.P., flour-miller; Thomas Ronayne, of Wellington, General Manager of the New Zealand Government Railways; John Stallworthy, of Aratapu, M.P., newspaper-proprietor; and Thomas Herbert Steadman, of Whangarei, solicitor: greeting.

WHEREAS the construction of certain portions of a line of railway which it is proposed shall extend from the City of Auckland through the northern peninsula of New Zealand has been authorized from time to time by various Railways Authorization Acts: And whereas the construction of a portion of the said line of railway from Maungaturoto to the southern boundary of Maungatapere Parish was authorized by the Railways Authorization Act, 1904, but doubts have arisen as to the best route or routes to be authorized for that portion of the line of railway northwards of McCarroll's Gap: And whereas for the purpose of deciding what route or routes should be so authorized by law it is deemed expedient that a commission should be issued for making inquiry in the most ample manner into all the facts and circumstances necessary and proper to be considered in determining the best route or routes to be adopted.

Now, therefore, know ye that I, John Poynder Dickson-Poynder, Baron Islington, the Governor of the Dominion of New Zealand, reposing trust and confidence in your knowledge, integrity, and ability, and acting by and with the advice and consent of the Executive Council of the said Dominion, do hereby, in exercise of the powers conferred on me by the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1908, and of all other powers and authorities enabling me in this behalf, constitute and appoint you, the said

VERNON HERBERT REED,
LEWIS PHILIP BECROFT,
JOHN COOM,
WILLIAM EVANS,
THOMAS RONAYNE,
JOHN STALLWORTHY, and
THOMAS HERBERT STEADMAN,

to be a Commission for the purpose of making inquiry into the matters following, that is to say:—

1—D. 4.

1. To inquire into and to ascertain the probable cost and economical commercial value and other merits of the several proposed routes of the said line of railway from McCarroll's Gap to a junction with the section of the Kawakawa-Hokianga Railway already in course of construction between Kawakawa and Kaikohe, with the view of determining the route or routes best calculated to develop the country, and to attain for the said railway and for the existing railways and the proposed extensions thereof the largest amount of profitable traffic.

2. To inquire into and to ascertain whether the said railway beyond McCarroll's Gap could be more profitably worked if connected with any other railway already constructed or to be constructed through the northern peninsula; and also whether it would be advisable, in order to facilitate the future development of the country to the best advantage, to connect the said railway with the navigable waters of the Wairoa River, or with the Port of Whangarei, or with any other port or ports.

3. And, generally, to make inquiry into any matter or thing which arises out of or is connected with the subjects of inquiry hereinbefore mentioned, or which in your opinion may be of assistance in fully ascertaining, explaining, and arriving at a fair and just conclusion in respect of the subjects of inquiry, and into the expediency of promoting any new legislation to give effect to your opinion.

And with the like advice and consent I do hereby appoint you, the said Vernon Herbert Reed, to be Chairman of the said Commission.

And for the better enabling you to carry these presents into effect, you or any four of you are hereby empowered and authorized to make and conduct any inquiry under these presents, and at such place or places in the said Dominion as you may deem expedient, with power to adjourn from time to time and from place to place as you think fit, and to call before you and examine on oath or otherwise as may be allowed by law such person or persons as you may think capable of affording you any information in the premises; and you are also hereby empowered to call for and examine all such books, documents, papers, maps, plans, accounts, or records as you shall judge likely to afford you the fullest information on the subject of this commission, and to inquire of and concerning the premises by all other lawful ways and means whatsoever. And, using all diligence, you, or any four of you, are required to report to me under your hands and seals your opinion resulting from the said inquiry in respect of the several matters and things inquired into by you, or by virtue of these presents, not later than the twenty-seventh day of May next ensuing, with power to certify unto me from time to time your several proceedings in respect of any of the matters aforesaid, if it may seem expedient for you to do so.

And it is hereby declared that these presents shall continue in full force and virtue although the inquiry is not regularly continued from time to time or from place to place by adjournments.

And it is hereby declared that these presents are issued under and subject to the provisions of the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1908.

(Seal.) Given under the hand of His Excellency the Right Honourable John Poynder Dickson-Poynder, Baron Islington, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over His Majesty's Dominion of New Zealand and its Dependencies; and issued under the Seal of the said Dominion, at the Government House, at Wellington, this 1st day of April, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and eleven.

Issued in Executive Council,
J. F. ANDREWS,
Clerk of the Executive Council.

GEO. FOWLDS,
For Minister of Public Works.

REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable John Poynder Dickson-Poynder,
Baron Islington, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over His
Majesty's Dominion of New Zealand and its Dependencies.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the Commissioners appointed by Your Excellency to inquire into the several matters and things mentioned and referred to in the commission, a copy of which is attached hereto, have the honour to report as follows:—

Every effort has been made by us to carry out in an efficient manner the duties intrusted to us.

Wherever evidence was offered we held sittings, and heard same; and, owing to the importance of our inquiry, we admitted the Press to such proceedings. Where possible we advertised our proposed sittings. All evidence was taken on oath and the witnesses were voluntary. We consider that on the whole we received very representative evidence, and we feel that such evidence has been of great assistance to us in the forming of our opinion. We also desire to mention that throughout we found the people in the localities visited most willing to assist us in the furtherance of our inquiry.

Your Commission has travelled over seven hundred miles (some of the distance having been covered on foot and some on horseback) and held eighteen meetings, at which sixty-eight witnesses were heard. The first meeting of the Commission was held on the 10th day of April, and the last at which evidence was taken on the 8th day of May. Both these meetings were held at Auckland.

We have made a thorough personal inspection of the land through which the several railway routes under consideration pass, and also of the land in other districts commercially affected. We visited Whangarei, Kawakawa, Opuā, Russell, Ohāeawai, Kaikohe, Okaihau, Rawene, Mangamuka, Victoria Valley, Kaitaia, Broadwood, Kohukohu, Taheke, Tutamoe, Kaihu, Dargaville, Kirikopuni, Houto, Parakao, Nukutawhiti, Titoki, Poroti, Whatitiri, Maungakaramēa, Waikiekie, and McCarroll's Gap. We thus had the opportunity of inspecting the lands in the far north to be brought into touch with railway communication, and of practically traversing the entire length of the proposed Main Trunk route, especially its eastern and western courses along the Tangihua Range. From our own observations, and from evidence brought before us, we are firmly of the opinion that the excellence of the land, enhanced by a most favourable climate, fully justifies the immediate construction of the Trunk Railway through the peninsula, with the object of opening out and developing the lands of the north; and it is considered that such railway would be a paying proposition.

Although the personal observations of the Commission support the evidence, it has occurred to us that it would strengthen the position if we made some comparisons with the existing railways.

To begin with, we would compare the conditions in the Wanganui - New Plymouth and the Waikato districts of the North Island with those in the districts affected by the North of Auckland Main Trunk Railway—McCarroll's Gap northward. In both the former the land is of a light loamy or sandy character, with an abundant rainfall; the principal products are butter, wool, and beef; there is but little agriculture; there are practically no manufacturing industries; and the timber business is a decreasing quantity.

On the Wanganui - New Plymouth coast in a distance of 110 to 120 miles there are five ports available for steamers and sailing-ships—namely, Waitara, New Plymouth, Opunake, Patea, and Wanganui. The land, although good, is only a narrow strip—say, twelve to fifteen miles wide; following the sea-coast, and about 1,000,000 acres in extent. The railway runs fairly well through the centre of it, rather more to the west than to the east. The butter, wool, and cheese is mainly

carried by coastal steamers to Wellington; but most of the live-stock is carried by rail. The passenger and merchandise traffic on the railway is good, and it is a paying concern. It might have been argued that with ports only about thirty miles apart a railway was unnecessary.

The Waikato country to the south of Auckland—say, from Mercer to Te Awamutu on the main line, and to Cambridge, Te Aroha, and Putaruru on the branches—offers a further illustration for comparison. For years this country has been in a backward condition; but now, under different methods of farming, and with different products (particularly butter) it is a prosperous district, and is sure to still further improve. The soil is of a light sandy nature, with but little humus, and requires much manure to make it productive. The approximate area suitable for cultivation and grazing is somewhat over 1,000,000 acres. The railway through the district is now earning a full share of the interest on the cost of construction.

The North of Auckland Trunk Railway similarly passes through a fairly good country—some very rich land—and generally all fit for pastoral pursuits, fruit-growing, and agriculture. On the whole, we are of opinion that the land compares very favourably with either the Taranaki or Waikato lands, while the climate is superior, and, under cultivation, will give equally good, or better, results.

Ultimately the main products will be butter, wool, beef, mutton, fruit, and agricultural products, as in the other districts with which it is being compared. The timber industry in this, as in those, will soon be of secondary importance; but there still remain considerable areas of suitable timber to send to market on the North Auckland Railway.

The approximate area of land from which traffic may be looked for to support this railway-line must be considerably over 1,000,000 acres; and we have no hesitation in saying that in a few years after the completion of the line the revenue will more than pay interest on the cost, estimated at, say, £700,000.

Further, comparing the traffic between Dunedin and Oamaru, and on the North Island Main Trunk line from Wellington to Auckland, it will be seen that, in spite of competition by sea, the railway takes most of the through-passenger traffic and some of the goods.

It seems to us quite probable that the navigable waters of the Wairoa will bring traffic to the railway, and we understand that even now advantage is being taken of railway facilities by persons living on the banks of this river or its tributaries.

We think the competition by river or sea will not materially affect the railway.

Our investigations further enabled us to locate approximately probable connections between the Main Trunk Railway and the isolated railway systems on the east and west coasts. These railway systems—the Whangarei-Kawakawa on the east and the Dargaville-Kaihu on the west—we visited, and we further saw portions of the route of the authorized extensions to Kaikohe from Kawakawa and northwards from Kaihu.

Taking seriatim the several matters we were appointed to inquire into, we respectfully report our opinion as follows:—

(1.) We are of opinion that the North of Auckland Railway should be expeditiously constructed to a junction with the section of the Kawakawa-Hokianga Railway, already in course of construction between Kawakawa and Kaikohe, before any branch lines are undertaken, as we consider the Main Trunk line of primary importance.

We have investigated three routes that the said railway could take between McCarroll's Gap and Mangakahia Valley—that is to say, a proposed route to the west of Waikiekie and the Tangihua Range; a proposed route to the east of Waikiekie and the Tangihua Range; and a suggested middle route lying between the aforesaid western and eastern routes through Waikiekie and to the west of the Tangihua Range, joining the first-named western route about nineteen miles from McCarroll's Gap.

We have carefully considered the economic and commercial value and other merits of the said western and eastern routes of the said line, and we are of opinion that the western route is the better in the interests of the Dominion, for the principal

reason that it traverses throughout its entire length, and thereby opens up, a large area of rich pastoral land of uniform quality, capable of carrying a large population when removed from its present isolation.

We, however, desire to bring under your notice for favourable consideration the said middle route, provided on further examination it is found to be practicable, for the reason that it would serve the same country on the west of the Tangihua Range as would be served by the said western route; and it would have the further advantage of being in a good position for an easy and short branch-rail connection with the Whangarei-Kawakawa system, passing through Maungakaramea, and practically serving all the rich lands on the east of the Tangihua Range beyond the reach of the Main Trunk Railway.

The probable cost of construction of the said line from McCarroll's Gap to a junction with the Kawakawa-Kaikohe Railway section by each of the three said proposed routes would approximately be the same—that is to say, about £700,000, the distance being about sixty-one miles.

(2.) (a.) We are of opinion that after the North of Auckland Main Trunk Railway has been completed, as before stated, a branch line should be constructed to connect it with the Whangarei-Kawakawa line at the south end. We believe this to be advisable in order to fully develop the country, and by so doing we anticipate a considerable through-traffic would result. We recommend that it take precedence over other branch lines north of Auckland.

(b.) We are of opinion that the time is premature for the making of any recommendation as to the connection of the Dargaville-Kaihu Railway with the North of Auckland Main Trunk line.

We desire to recommend that all large blocks of land, whether owned by Europeans or Natives, lying on the route of the North of Auckland Main Trunk Railway or adjacent thereto, and likely to be affected in value by the construction of the line, be acquired by the Crown without delay for closer settlement.

We have the honour to forward herewith a copy of the evidence submitted to the Commission as recorded by the official reporters.

We have the honour to be

Your Excellency's most obedient servants,

VERNON H. REED, Chairman.
LEWIS P. BECROFT,
JOHN COOM,
WM. EVANS,
T. RONAYNE,
JOHN STALLWORTHY,
T. H. STEADMAN.

Auckland, Thursday, the 11th day of May 1911.

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS.

AUCKLAND, MONDAY, 10TH APRIL, 1911.

The Commission held its first meeting at the Municipal Chambers, Auckland, on Monday, the 10th April, 1911, at 10.30 a.m.

Present: Vernon Herbert Reed, of Kawakawa, M.P., solicitor (in the chair); Louis Philip Becroft, of Port Albert, J.P., farmer; John Coom, of Remuera, Auckland, civil engineer; William Evans, of Timaru, J.P., flour-miller; Thomas Ronayne, of Wellington, General Manager of New Zealand Railways; John Stallworthy, of Aratapu, M.P., newspaper-proprietor; Thomas Herbert Steadman, of Whangarei, solicitor.

Mr. John Alexander Wilson, District Engineer, Auckland, of the Public Works Department, was also present.

The Secretary read the Commission.

It was resolved that the meetings of the Commission be open to the public and the Press, excepting when the Commission was deliberating.

It was resolved that the evidence be taken on oath.

The Chairman brought before the Commission a proposed itinerary as far as Dargaville, which was discussed and agreed to.

It was resolved that all voluntary evidence in connection with the inquiry be accepted.

The Commission resolved to take evidence at Whangarei on the 11th and 12th April, and the Secretary was instructed to advertise the meetings accordingly.

The Commission adjourned at 11.10 a.m., to meet at Whangarei.

WHANGAREI, TUESDAY, 11TH APRIL, 1911.

The Commission met at the Courthouse, Whangarei, at 11 a.m.

All the Commissioners were present.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Commission resolved that the hours of meeting at Whangarei should be from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and from 2 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

It was resolved that the Crown Lands Department should be asked to allow Ranger Shannon to accompany the Commission on its tour.

The Secretary was instructed to ask the chairman of the Kaipara Railway League, Dargaville, what places the league desired the Commission to visit.

The following witnesses attended and gave evidence on oath:—

1. William Andrew Carruth, solicitor, Whangarei.
2. John David McKenzie, member of the Whangarei Harbour Board.
3. James Neil McCarroll, Whangarei.
4. James Miller Killen, barrister and solicitor, Whangarei.
5. James Harrison, storekeeper, Whangarei.
6. Donald William Jack, draper, Whangarei.

WHANGAREI, WEDNESDAY, 12TH APRIL, 1911.

The Commission met at 10 a.m.

Present: All the Commissioners.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The following witnesses attended and gave evidence:—

7. George Coppin Marshall, storekeeper, Whangarei.
8. Alexander Gordon MacKenzie, farmer, Otonga.
9. Charles Ernest Randolph Mackesy, land agent, Whangarei.
10. David Miller, farmer and flax-miller, Mangapai.
11. Edmund Campbell Purdie, school-teacher, Whangarei, secretary, North Auckland Railway League.
12. Patrick Joseph Mulhern, farmer, of Mangakahia, but residing at Whangarei.

It was decided to take evidence next at Kawakawa, on Saturday, 15th April.

The Commission adjourned at 12.30 p.m., and the Commissioners then visited the district in the vicinity of Tikurangi, following up the Otaika Valley. They viewed the country from the Tikurangi Trig. Station.

The Commission proceeded to Kawakawa on Thursday, 13th April, and on to Russell by the evening train the same day, and spent Friday, 14th April, in inspecting the harbour.

KAWAKAWA, SATURDAY, 15TH APRIL, 1911.

The Commission met at the Courthouse at 10 a.m.

Present : All the Commissioners.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The following witnesses attended and gave evidence :—

13. William Stewart, farmer and sawmiller, Kawakawa.
14. Henry Clough Blundell, County Clerk and Engineer, Kawakawa.
15. Harry Long, Tanekaha, farmer.

The Commission adjourned at 12 noon to Rawene.

RAWENE, MONDAY, 17TH APRIL.

The Commission met at the Courthouse at 7.30 a.m.

Present : All the Commissioners.

The Commissioners resolved to visit Victoria Valley and Kaitaia.

The following witnesses attended and gave evidence :—

16. George Thomas Clendon, Chairman, Hokianga County Council.
17. Ernest McLeod, Clerk and Treasurer, and recently Engineer, Hokianga County Council.

It was decided to take evidence next at Kohukohu.

The Commission adjourned at 8.30 a.m., and proceeded by launch to Mangamuka, and thence, *via* the Mangamuka track, by horses and trap to Victoria Valley and Kaitaia, arriving at the latter place at 7 p.m.

KOHUKOHU, WEDNESDAY, 19TH APRIL, 1911.

The Commission sat at the Courthouse at 9 a.m., having arrived the previous evening from Kaitaia, *via* the Takahue-Broadwood Road.

Present : All the Commissioners.

The following witnesses attended and gave evidence :—

18. George Gardiner Menzies, Engineer, Hokianga County Council.
19. Alfred Cooke Yarborough, timber and gum merchant, Kohukohu.

The Commission adjourned at 9.30 a.m., and proceeded by launch to Taheke, and thence by coach to Kaikohe.

KAIKOHE, WEDNESDAY, 19TH APRIL, 1911.

The Commission sat at Dickeson's Hall, at 7.30 p.m.

Present : All the Commissioners.

The following witnesses attended and gave evidence :—

20. George Frederick Dickeson, gum-buyer and storekeeper, Kaikohe.
21. Alfred William Edwards, storekeeper, Kaikohe, and member of Bay of Islands County Council.

Mr. A. T. Close, of Remuera, Bay of Islands, wrote tendering a statement he intended giving as evidence had he not been prevented from attending by an accident. It was resolved to ask Mr. Close to support his statement by a statutory declaration, and then to consider the matter further.

The Commission adjourned at 9.25 p.m.

KAIKOHE, THURSDAY, 20TH APRIL, 1911.

The Commission held no formal meeting this day.

It was decided, on account of the flooded state of the rivers and the inclement weather, to postpone the proposed trip down the Mangakahia Valley, and to proceed to Dargaville by the Taheke-Kaihu Road, and visit the Mangakahia Valley when the weather permitted. Four of the Commissioners drove down the Mangakahia Valley to Tautaru, and inspected the country therein.

The Commission proceeded to Taheke, spent the night there, and arrived at Dargaville at 7.45 p.m. on Friday, 21st instant.

DARGAVILLE, SATURDAY, 22ND APRIL, 1911.

The Commission met at the Courthouse at 10 a.m.

Present : All the Commissioners.

It was resolved to ask the Harbourmaster to give evidence regarding the navigation of the Wairoa River.

The following witnesses attended, and gave evidence :—

22. Horace Hammond, Engineer, Hobson County.
23. Henry James Slade, Chairman, Hobson County Council.
24. Thomas Fred Downes, farmer, Tokatoka.
25. Edwin Harding, farmer, Dargaville.
26. Thomas Webb, farmer, Te Kopuru.
27. Frederick William Peddle, farmer, Hohanga.

The Commission adjourned at 5 p.m. to 9.30 a.m. on Monday, 24th April.

DARGAVILLE, MONDAY, 24TH APRIL, 1911.

The Commission sat at 9.30 a.m.

Present : All the Commissioners.

The minutes of the previous meetings held at Kawakawa, Rawene, Kohukohu, Kaikohe, and Dargaville were read and confirmed.

Mr. R. McCarroll wrote, through the Minister of Public Works, offering the Commission hospitality while at McCarroll's Gap, and it was decided to accept the same with thanks.

The following witnesses attended and gave evidence :—

28. Ellis Rees Ellis, temporary Gum Ranger, in the service of the Crown, Dargaville.
29. Benjamin Emrys Williams, storekeeper, Dargaville.
30. Joseph William Shannon, Crown Lands Ranger, Auckland.
31. Dan Savident, Harbourmaster, Kaipara.
32. Thomas Bassett, Te Kopuru, farmer.
33. Arthur John Stallworthy, journalist, Dargaville.
34. Sam Heath, farmer, Tutamoe.
35. Woolsey Allen, Dargaville, sawmiller.
36. Alfred Ernest Harding, Mangawhare, farmer.

The Commission adjourned at 5 p.m.

PARAKAO, WEDNESDAY, 26TH APRIL, 1911.

The Commission arrived from Dargaville on Tuesday at 9 p.m., having travelled *via* Kirikopuni, and viewing the country on the western route. It proceeded up the Mangakahia Gorge on Wednesday morning, and held a sitting (all the Commissioners being present) at Nukutawhiti at 11 a.m., the following witnesses being examined :—

37. Hare Mokena Wharepapa, aboriginal Native (through an interpreter).
38. George Ruddell, Pakotai, farmer.
39. Edward John Mulhern, Mangakahia, farmer.
40. George Oswald Dysart, Nukutawhiti, storekeeper.

The Commissioners proceeded some distance farther on up the gorge, and then returned to Parakao. A meeting was held at Parakao at 7 p.m.

Present : All the Commissioners.

The minutes of the last meeting at Dargaville were read and confirmed.

The following witnesses attended and gave evidence :—

41. Andrew Hugh Murray, of Opouteke, Mangakahia, settler.
42. Alexander Pollock, of Parakao, farmer.
43. Alfred Hill, of Mangakahia Valley, farmer.

The Commission resolved to sit at Auckland at 10 a.m. on Friday, 5th May, to take evidence ; and further resolved that the Engineer-in-Chief, the Superintending Engineer, the District Engineer, Auckland, Public Works Department, the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Auckland, and the District Valuer, Auckland, be summoned to give evidence.

The Secretary was directed to secure additional assistance to cope with the reporting-work in Auckland, if necessary.

The Commission adjourned at 8 p.m.

TITOKI, THURSDAY, 27TH APRIL, 1911.

The Commission left Parakao at 8.30 a.m., and held a sitting at the hall, Titoki, at 11 a.m.

Present : All the Commissioners.

The following witnesses attended and gave evidence :—

44. Eber Baldwin, farmer, Kirikopuni.
45. Walter Holster, farmer, Houto, Titoki.

The Commission then proceeded to Maungakaramea, *via* the Wairua Falls, and arrived at Maungakaramea at 4 p.m.

MAUNGAKARAMEA, THURSDAY, 27TH APRIL, 1911.

The Commission sat here at 7.30 p.m.

Present : All the Commissioners.

The following witnesses attended and gave evidence :—

46. David James O'Carroll, farmer, Maungakaramea.
47. William Crawford, farmer, Maungakaramea.
48. Leslie Peers Adams, farmer, Maungakaramea.
49. James Cameron Miller, farmer and storekeeper, Maungakaramea.

The Commission adjourned at 10 p.m.

MAUNGAKARAMEA, FRIDAY, 28TH APRIL, 1911.

The Commission spent the day viewing the country on the eastern and western routes. Some of the Commissioners ascended Mount Horokaka, one of the principal peaks of the Tangihua Range, and had a good view from there of the surrounding country and proposed railway routes to as far south as McCarroll's Gap, and as far north as Parakao.

Other Commissioners followed the eastern route towards Tangiteroria.

At 7.15 p.m. a meeting was held.

Present : All the Commissioners.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

Mr. Steadman was granted leave of absence from Saturday night, 29th April, to Thursday, 4th May.

The following witnesses attended and gave evidence :—

50. Rowland Hill, farmer, Tangihua.
51. Patrick Lamb, settler, Maungakaramea.
52. Henry Bernard Sloane, stock-dealer, Mangapai.

The Commission adjourned at 8.15 p.m. to Waikiekie.

WAIKIEKIE, SATURDAY, 29TH APRIL, 1911.

The Commission arrived here at noon, and held a meeting at 2 p.m.

Present : The Chairman, Mr. Evans, Mr. Stallworthy, and Mr. Steadman.

The other members of the Commission visited the line of the eastern route, and subsequently the Commission rode over both routes, going as far as the Omana Block.

The following witnesses attended and gave evidence :—

53. George Hugh Smith, school-teacher, Waikiekie.
54. James Gilbert Ward, dairy-factory manager, Waikiekie.
55. Harry Hilford, storekeeper, Waikiekie.
56. Michael Henry Mason, settler, Waikiekie.
57. Robert Taylor, dairy-farmer, Mareretu.
58. James Thompson Walker, farmer, Maungakaramea.

The Commission adjourned at 4 p.m. to McCarroll's Gap.

MCCARROLL'S GAP, MONDAY, 1ST MAY, 1911.

The Commission sat at Mr. Robert McCarroll's homestead at 9.30 a.m.

Present : All the Commissioners.

Mr. Robert McCarroll (59) attended and gave evidence.

The Commission resolved to ask the Minister of Public Works to sanction a reconnaissance survey being made of a suggested alternative route north of McCarroll's Gap, through Waikiekie, and joining the western route at Tauraroa Valley; the report to be sent direct to the Commission not later than 10th May, in order to save time.

The Commission adjourned at 10.15 a.m., and proceeded, *via* Kaiwaka and Topene, to Auckland, arriving at Auckland at 3.40 p.m. on Tuesday, 2nd May.

AUCKLAND, FRIDAY, 5TH MAY, 1911.

The Commission met at the Municipal Chambers at 10 a.m.

Present : All the Commissioners.

The minutes of the two previous meetings were read and confirmed.

The following witnesses attended and gave evidence :—

60. Francis Mander, M.P., for Marsden.
61. James Trounson, timber-merchant and farmer, residing at Northcote.
62. Gerald Loftus Peacocke, chairman, Auckland Railway League.
63. John Alexander Wilson, District Engineer, Public Works Department, Auckland.

The Commission adjourned at 4.45 p.m.

AUCKLAND, SATURDAY, 6TH MAY, 1911.

The Commission met at 10 a.m.

Present : All the Commissioners.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

64. Eric Charles Gold Smith, Commissioner of Crown Lands and Chief Surveyor, Auckland, attended and gave evidence.

The Minister of Public Works telegraphed sanctioning the survey of the proposed alternative route through Waikiekie, and joining western route at Tauraroa Valley, provided it could be completed before 10th May.

The Commission adjourned at 10.45 a.m. to 10 a.m. on Monday, 8th May.

AUCKLAND, MONDAY, 8TH MAY, 1911.

The Commission met at 10 a.m.

Present : All the Commissioners.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Under-Secretary of Public Works forwarded returns supplied by the Government Statistician showing the population, approximately, according to the recent census within a seven-mile radius on either side of the proposed eastern and western routes, as follows : west, 1,798 ; east, 1,928. (See Exhibit No. 1.)

The officer in charge, Valuation Department, Auckland, forwarded, by instruction of the Valuer-General, a return showing the capital value and number of holdings for a distance of two miles on each side of the proposed eastern and western routes to be as follows : west—holdings, 385 ; capital value, £153,721 : east—holdings, 459 ; capital value, £154,482.

The following witnesses attended and gave evidence :—

Mr. J. A. Wilson, District Engineer, Public Works Department, Auckland—examination resumed.

65. Mr. R. W. Holmes, Engineer-in-Chief, Public Works Department.

66. Mr. W. F. Thompson, District Valuer, Whangarei.

67. Mr. F. C. Ewen, Crown Lands Ranger, Auckland.

68. Mr. E. Mitchelson, timber-merchant, Auckland.

69. Mr. A. H. O'Loughlen, Railway Goods Agent, Auckland.

The latter put in some tables of freights and fares between Auckland and the Port of the Kaipara, and between Auckland and stations on the Whangarei Section New Zealand Railways. (See Exhibit No. 4.)

The taking of evidence then closed.

The Commission adjourned at 4.20 p.m., and resolved to meet at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 10th May, to consider its report.

AUCKLAND, WEDNESDAY, 10TH MAY, 1911.

The Commission met at 10.15 a.m.

Present : All the Commissioners.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

A report was received from Mr. J. J. Wilson, Assistant Engineer, Public Works Department, Whangarei, on the survey of the suggested alternative line near Waikiekie. (See Exhibit No. 3.)

The Department of Lands forwarded maps—(1) showing the areas of lands lying along certain strips of the eastern and western routes, divided into Native land, reserves, grazing-runs, freehold, lease in perpetuity, perpetual leases, pastoral runs, and occupation with right to purchase ; (2) timber on Crown lands and State forests on lands north of McCarroll's Gap.

The District Engineer, Public Works Department, Auckland, forwarded estimates of distances and cost of eastern and western routes : Eastern route—McCarroll's to Parakao, 38 miles 56 chains 62 links ; cost, £456,152. Parakao to Junction, south of Kaikohe, 22 miles 67 chains ; cost, £261,600. Total, 61 miles 43 chains 62 links ; cost, £717,752. *Via* western route—McCarroll's to Parakao, distance 38 miles 16 chains 38 links ; cost, £444,142. Parakao to Junction, south of Kaikohe, 22 miles 67 chains ; cost, £261,600. Total, 61 miles 3 chains 38 links ; cost £705,742.

The Commission then proceeded to consider the draft report.

The report was agreed to, with minor amendments, down to clause 16.

Clause 17 : (1.) We are of opinion that the North of Auckland Railway should be expeditiously constructed to its northern objective, through Kaikohe to the far north, before any branch lines are undertaken, as we consider the Main Trunk line of primary importance. We have investigated three routes that the said railway could take between McCarroll's Gap and Mangakahia Valley—that is to say, a proposed route to the west of Waikiekie and the Tangihua Range ; a proposed route to the east of Waikiekie and the Tangihua Range ; and a suggested middle route lying between the aforesaid western and eastern routes through Waikiekie to the west of the Tangihua Range, joining the first-named western route about nineteen miles from McCarroll's Gap.

Mr. Coom moved, That the words " a junction with a section of the Kawakawa-Hokianga Railway, now in course of construction between Kawakawa and Kaikohe," be inserted after the words " expeditiously constructed to."

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Steadman moved that the words " before any branch lines are undertaken " be struck out.

For the amendment : Messrs. Steadman and Evans.

Against : Messrs. Coom, Ronayne, Becroft, Stallworthy, and the Chairman.

The amendment was negatived, and the clause, as altered by Mr. Coom's amendment, was agreed to, Mr. Steadman dissenting.

The remainder of the report was agreed to, with amendments, and some new clauses were added.

The Commission resolved to meet at 2 p.m. on Thursday to sign the report.

AUCKLAND, THURSDAY, 11TH MAY, 1911.

The final meeting of the Commission was held at 2 p.m.

Present : All the Commissioners.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Commission considered its report as finally passed.

The report was adopted without further amendment, signed by all the members, and ordered to be transmitted to His Excellency the Governor as the report of the Commission.

It was resolved that the maps embodying certain information supplied by various Government departments be printed in the appendix to the report.

Mr. Steadman proposed, and Mr. Coom seconded, That the Auckland City Council be thanked for the use of the Council Chamber for the sittings of the Commission. Agreed to.

Mr. Evans moved, and Mr. Becroft seconded, That Mr. Robert McCarroll be thanked for the hospitality extended to the Commission during its stay at McCarroll's Gap. Agreed to.

On the motion of the Chairman, seconded by Mr. Ronayne, the Secretary was thanked for his services during the course of the Commission. The vote of thanks was accompanied by the presentation of a memento of the trip from all the members of the Commission, which Mr. Russell suitably acknowledged.

On the motion of Mr. Ronayne, it was resolved that the Chairman should convey to the Minister of Public Works, by letter, the Commission's appreciation of the manner in which the Secretary, Mr. Russell, and the official reporter, Mr. Thomson, had discharged their duties.

A vote of thanks to the Chairman for the able manner in which he had presided over the meetings of the Commission, moved by Mr. Ronayne and seconded by Mr. Steadman, was unanimously agreed to.

The Chairman, Mr. Vernon H. Reed, acknowledged the compliment.

The proceedings terminated at 3 p.m.

It was agreed that the Chairman sign the minutes of the final meeting.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WHANGAREI, TUESDAY, 11TH APRIL, 1911.

WILLIAM ANDREW CARRUTH examined. (No. 1.)

The Chairman: Probably it would be easier for you, Mr. Carruth, to make a statement.

Witness: I am a barrister and solicitor, practising in Whangarei, where I have been a resident for the last twenty-five years. I know something about the country all round about the County of Whangarei, and portions of the surrounding counties. With regard to the scope of this Commission, I wish to speak generally, especially to what I think is the second portion of the programme—namely, the connection between the Main Trunk North line and the line which is already opened running from Whangarei through to Kawakawa and on to Kaikohe. I think it would be highly advantageous to the interests of the Dominion that that connection should be proceeded with as early as it possibly can be. One of the reasons I give for this is that there is a length of line already in existence between Whangarei and Kawakawa, and branching off from Scoria Flat, on that line, towards Kaikohe: it is in course of construction, and being quickly carried on towards Kaikohe. I understand that that portion of the line will be completed in about two years' time, and I have no doubt that the further extension of that line to the waters of the Hokianga will be made, and, if so, will be done in about five years. Although I am not very well acquainted with the lands through which the extension to Hokianga will run, still, I am given to understand that it is a very easily constructed line. I think if that line is completed from Hokianga right through here, as I have little hesitation in saying it will be at the end of the time I have mentioned, I think it would be one of the chief reasons for completing the space between Whangarei and the main line in the vicinity of McCarroll's Gap. The line from McCarroll's Gap should be, I am told—of course, subject to engineering confirmation—extended a little further north, and it would make the distance then to Whangarei somewhere about twenty-four or twenty-five miles. If that line of railway were completed it would then bring the people not only of this county, but all the people of Hukerenui, Towai, and other villages on the line to Kawakawa and Kaikohe, and, of course, the people from the Hokianga waters, into immediate touch with Auckland and the southern portions of the Dominion. It would be then one continuous line, and I think it would be a payable line. It is a well-known fact that the returns from that portion of the line which has been open for a good many years have been entirely satisfactory. I think it has been sometimes the best and sometimes the second-best paying line in New Zealand, and I see very little reason why the extension of it, with the additional paying traffic that will come upon it from the settlements in the north, should not keep it nearly if not equally as good a paying line as at present. That line that I have mapped out from the Hokianga right down to Whangarei and into the vicinity of McCarroll's Gap is through fairly thickly populated districts. It would serve a great extent of country, and I think would be a remunerative line almost from the start. It seems to me a pity that a line should be brought up as far as McCarroll's Gap and, with a space of only twenty-four or twenty-five miles between them, it should not be connected with an already existing and payable line. I think, as a matter of business and commercial enterprise, it should be done, and I should say be done first. Personally, although my interests are with the eastern portion of this peninsula, I do not feel disposed to say that the Main Trunk North should stop at McCarroll's Gap or its vicinity.

1. *The Chairman.*] That it should proceed northwards by way of the Mangakahia Valley?—I do not want to stop the progress of that line by any means, but I think this connection of which I am speaking should be done first, as it is paramount in the interests of the country. I do not say that the other should not be done, because I verily believe that that is the shortest way to reach Kaikohe, and I think that the basis of railway-construction should be to have the line as short as possible, commensurate with the least expense in construction. As to whether it should go east or west of the Tangihua Mountains, I think that is more for the engineers to decide. Still, if I had to make my choice—and I do not want to speak as an expert—I should choose its extension through Maungakaramea into the Mangakahia Valley.

2. That is, the eastern route?—Yes. I suggest that because I think there is the thicker population on that route, and I think it is only fair to those settlers who have taken up land there that the line which they had been led to believe for many years past would go through that country, and which has induced many people to settle there, should undoubtedly be made. Whichever route is decided upon, I think it will be some considerable time before it reaches a paying-point. I have a suggestion to make with regard to opening up the lands of the Mangakahia, which I would like to lay before the Commission, and which I hope will not be considered outside the scope of the Commission. It is that the people of Mangakahia would be well served if an electric line was run from the line which I suggest between a point beyond McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei. If such an electric line was run into the Mangakahia it would serve all the purposes for many years to come. It is just possible, too, that if that suggestion was acted upon it would save the construction of the main line further north. It is a well-known fact that the Wairua Waterfalls lie directly in the line of my suggested electric line, and if the power from those falls was properly harnessed I see no reason why we could not have a sufficient supply for the purposes of the Boroughs of Dargaville and Whangarei in respect to lighting and power to supply the

factories and industries both in and about Dargaville and Whangarei and the other portions of the two counties of Whangarei and Hobson and the adjoining counties, and also to supply the power for this electric line which I suggest. I think that such a line could be worked very economically by this power. It would mean, of course, the proper harnessing of the present falls as they are now. It would mean an extension of the work there, but I think it would give a very reasonable and fair opportunity for the Government to carry out their ideas with respect to the use of these water-powers throughout the country. I think that should be one of the first things that they should begin their electric-power scheme with, those falls being so handy to so many places for so many purposes. Coming back to the line from Hokianga through Whangarei to the Main Trunk line, I think that such a line would be of immense benefit to the farming community in the north by enabling them to bring their stock not only to Auckland, but further south. I may say that stock is even now taken from Waby through to Auckland and further south, and the further the line is extended the greater are the facilities that would be offered. Of course, that argument would apply equally well to the central line as to the Hokianga-Whangarei line, but what we say is, that the people of the Dominion would have a more immediate benefit for many years to come from the linking-up of the Hokianga-Whangarei line with the main line.

3. *Mr. Coom.*] Do you consider that by the construction of the line to McCarroll's Gap from Whangarei the present shipment of stock would be diverted to the line?—There is a strong probability that with regard to stock it would.

4. And general merchandise?—I do not know about that. Water might carry that; but a very considerable number of passengers would go.

5. Can you give the Commission any idea as to the number of stock that might be carried?—No; I can only speak from hearsay.

6. You referred to the Whangarei line being one of the best-paying lines in the Dominion: is that not due mainly to the coal business?—Coal and timber, yes.

7. Would the coal business be diverted from the shipping if the line was constructed from here to McCarroll's Gap?—I do not say it would, but the supplies to people living along that line and further south would go by it. It would give a fillip to the consumption of coal.

8. Do you consider that it would divert the coal now being shipped to Auckland over the line?—I would not like to say that.

9. You advocate the main line being constructed as well as the diversion through Whangarei?—Yes, but at a slower pace. I think the connection between these two lines should be made first, and that the other should go on as the country can afford it.

10. When the main line is constructed as you recommend, would not all the traffic north of Kaikohe, and for some distance between Kaikohe and Kawakawa, be diverted over it?—No, because there would be plenty of country then to feed the two lines; but under present conditions the main line would be non-payable, because there is not the population to support it. That is why I say the central line should go slower in the meantime.

11. You recommend an electric line to Mangakahia. Is that because of the cheapness of construction?—Yes.

12. You consider that a small piece of electric railway between steam-working railways would be cheaper than to have the whole steam-worked?—Yes; it would go through settled country, and the settlers could avail themselves of the power along the line.

13. In what way would it be cheaper?—I have understood that electric power, where favourably generated, was the cheaper power.

14. Take the cost of construction, for instance?—I do not think it would be necessary to have such a finely constructed line as in Auckland. If the electric power is not going to be cheaper there would be no advantage in so constructing the line.

15. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What is the cost of freight between Whangarei and Auckland?—I think it is 7s. 6d. per ton. The passenger fare is £1 2s. 6d. first class, and 15s. second class.

16. Do you think that the railway from Whangarei to Auckland would be able to compete with a 7s. 6d. rate by water?—I think in the matter of freights the water-carriage would hold its own.

17. There would therefore be no benefit from bringing the train in to Whangarei?—For very many miles the line would be used for distributing goods from Whangarei.

18. In advocating the line from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei, have you not left out from railway-communication altogether a large area of country to be settled?—There is country to be settled there, but the railway would be of benefit to them, and there is also the Wairoa River, which I consider a splendid waterway.

19. What is the carriage from Whangarei to Mangakaramea?—I do not know. Some of the settlers would get their goods by the Mangapai River.

20. Do you know that the Government has in mind the electrifying of the whole of the North Auckland railways?—I cannot recollect having seen it mentioned; but I think my idea would be better than that.

21. Whangarei is talking about getting electric power in, is it not?—Yes, and also to supply Dargaville.

22. Would it not then be advisable to electrify the Main Trunk to Kawakawa?—It would be all right if they could get the power, but I do not know that there is the power at the falls for that.

23. Could not Whangarei, if it got in electric power, tap the districts that you have spoken of with electric trams, and so compete with the railway you advocate?—I hope so; but I think that should be a line run by the Government.

24. And therefore the railway you suggest, if made first, would have to compete with the electric trams of the future?—I think it would be a line that would stand for all time, and would be a very difficult line to compete with.

25. I think you said that the question of the line going east or west of the Tangihuas was a matter for the engineers?—Yes.

26. But that in your opinion it should go to the east?—Yes.

27. It is a question for the general public, then?—Yes. We all have a feeling about it.

28. *Mr. Becroft.*] Would you define the districts the proposed central route goes through?—What I mean by the central route, and what we all mean by the central route, is a line from McCarroll's Gap east or west of the Tangihua hills.

29. *The Chairman.*] The central route must go through Mangakahia Valley, on account of the hills and mountains on both east and west?—I think so.

30. You know that if the central route is adopted the railway system between Whangarei and Kawakawa and Hokianga will be connected at Kaikohe?—I understand that that is the proposal.

31. If the connection is made between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap, do you know what extra mileage it will entail those persons in travelling to Auckland?—I cannot give it exactly, but it would be something extra

32. Even if the connection was made between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei the freight would still go from Whangarei?—I think the merchandise, or most of it, would.

33. The passengers would go by railway?—There would be a big passenger trade.

34. What do you base that opinion upon?—Personally, from experience, I would sooner go by rail than by steamer; and I know of many others who would too, to avoid the open water.

35. How long does the steamer take to go to Auckland?—About seven hours.

36. Do you know, approximately, how long the journey to Auckland by rail would take?—About the same.

37. You say that the return second-class fare by steamer is 15s., and with a second-class single fare of 1d. per mile it would be 6s. dearer to go to Auckland by rail from Whangarei than by steamer?—Yes; but for all that, I think the people would prefer to go by rail if they could do so. I think there would be a great passenger traffic.

38. You do not think the Mangakahia route would pay at the present time? Do you know the country between the Mangakahia Valley and the Tangihua Range?—No.

39. Do you know that the population of the Bay of Islands electorate, including Maoris, was twenty thousand five years ago?—I did not know that.

40. Knowing that that population existed five years ago, do you still say that the Mangakahia Valley would not pay on account of the population?—I am surprised to learn that there are twenty thousand in the electorate, to begin with. If there are twenty thousand there, there must be thirty thousand in Whangarei.

41. *Mr. Steadman.*] Do you know that passenger traffic is already being diverted by railway and coach to Whangarei, and on from there to Auckland, in order to avoid the long steamer-trip round Cape Brett?—I think so.

42. They prefer the train and coach to steamer?—Certainly they do; and that is why I think they will continue the train when they come here.

43. *Mr. Becroft.*] What transit facilities are provided and in course of construction to connect the Whangarei-Kawakawa line with steamer traffic?—The line is extended to Grahamtown, and with the extended wharf and deep water no doubt extra facilities will be afforded by the Northern Company, or any other company.

44. Will the time-table fit in with the railway time-table, irrespective of tide?—I expect they would do so.

45. That is the object?—I do not know that; but as a matter of business they would.

46. When the train runs to the terminus the tide will not affect the steamer traffic at all?—I think so. There is a bad part on One-tree Point, but I do not think it would interfere with the passage of steamers.

JOHN DAVID MCKENZIE examined. (No. 2.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, and a member of the Whangarei Harbour Board.

2. Will you make a statement to the Commission?—Generally speaking, I follow Mr. Carruth, in so far that I think the railway should come this side of McCarroll's Gap, that the Main Trunk line should go west of the Tangihua Mountains, and that Whangarei should be connected by a branch off the main line.

3. Is that the same as from the Gap?—From a distance outside the Gap. The two lines should be kept together as far as convenient, and then from the point of divergence the Trunk line should go west, and the branch line should be brought in to Whangarei to connect with the Whangarei-Kawakawa line. The reason I think the main line should go to the west of the Tangihua Mountains is that it would go through a country that is indifferently served now by any means of communication, and it would be the shortest route that the Main Trunk North could take. The reasons I would give for connecting the main line with Whangarei by a branch line would be—(a) that the people who reside in that part of the country have been expecting the railway-line to follow the original survey (Knorpp's line), and have been preparing for a great number of years—arranging the direction of the roads—so as to meet with the long-expected communication; (b) that the people through as far as McCarroll's Gap would in all probability find it cheaper to bring their produce to market by making use of the Port of Whangarei. The third reason would be that I think the main trunk lines of the country should have branches to the principal ports in order to facilitate the defence of the country. Practically the whole of the country lying between McCarroll's Gap and the north, as far as Kawakawa, is a coal-area, and we must defend our coal against the encroachment of an enemy, as well as our other property.

Besides these reasons, we have to consider the convenience of the people who would be travelling towards the north from Auckland and the people travelling from the north towards Auckland for many years before they could get as far as Kaikohe, or a junction with it. It is urged as against the western route that they have a very sparse population at the present time, that the Mangakahia Valley, through which it would go, is not thickly populated. It is only a question of time when that valley will be very thickly populated if the land is cut up to induce people to come there. The land is good, and it is easily worked. It will be used for a great number of years for grazing purposes. There are thousands of acres there on which a man who had 100 or 150 acres could milk sixty or ninety cows. The quality of the land is good. Besides this, there will be an immediate trade in the carriage of timber. There is a large block of Government land covered with timber which is not opened. That land, I am told by people interested in timber, contains 100,000,000 ft. of millable timber. Those who know the country well tell me that they would give £5 an acre for the land when cleared of timber. It is mixed timber. I think the Main Trunk line should be pushed on as speedily as possible to, say, Pakatai, the centre of the Mangakahia Valley, which would enable the back-settlers there to get their produce to the market and their goods in. They have now to pay £2 and £3 a ton on all their stuff that goes out, and that is a heavy impost on new settlers.

4. *Mr. Coom.*] Do you know the difference in length between the western and the eastern route?—I do not think there is a difference of many miles.

5. You say that if the connection by rail was made with Whangarei the people south towards McCarroll's Gap would bring their goods to Whangarei for shipment to Auckland: does not that do away with Mr. Carruth's argument that the goods would go to Auckland by way of rail?—I do not remember his saying that. Stock, I believe, would go for a certain distance. They would go to the nearest port.

6. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Have you a good knowledge of the country west of the Tangihua?—I have some knowledge of it.

7. Is it good land?—I have no hesitation in saying so.

8. The population, you think, would grow?—Yes. I have no doubt it will carry a large population if they cut up the sections. If they are kept as at present the land will not be thickly populated.

9. *Mr. Steadman.*] How many times have you been on the western route?—I have been on and off it for the last twenty or thirty years. I have worked timber up to the Mangakahia Bridge and up to Otoa.

10. Have you been over the Tangihua Range?—Yes, two or three years ago.

11. *Mr. Becroft.*] Could you give the approximate distance from the point of junction to Whangarei?—About twenty-one miles, and easy construction, apparently.

JAMES NEIL MCCARROLL examined. (No. 3.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am a farmer and sawmiller, residing at Whangarei, and I hold the rank of captain in the mounted squadron in this district.

2. Would you make a statement to the Commission?—I have been a resident of the north for about twenty-five years. I resided for a good many years at what is known as McCarroll's Gap, and for about five years in Whangarei. I have a good knowledge of the north, my business having taken me frequently in the vicinity of the different routes advocated for the railway. I consider, in the interests of the country as a whole, and in respect to the Auckland Province in particular, that the interests of the north would be best served by having a line north from the Gap to connect at Whangarei with the line to Kawakawa and Kaikohe. This line from Whangarei northwards is almost completed to Kaikohe, and in a few years will be completed right up to Hokianga, and with this short section of twenty-six or twenty-seven miles to McCarroll's Gap put in, the country from Wellington to Hokianga would be linked up by railway. In the meantime the route through to Whangarei would be the main line, but in time, and as the country developed, it might be necessary to continue what is called the main line northwards. In that case the line should keep to the east of the Tangihua Range to Kaikohe.

3. *Mr. Coom.*] Is that the eastern or the western route?—The eastern. The eastern line is close to the mountains. After the railway leaves the Gap to go north, either by the Whangarei route or the eastern route, it is of easy construction, and is the shortest. By coming here it would suit the largest portion of the population there is in the north. The population of the Whangarei County is ten thousand, exclusive of the borough, which is three thousand, and, as the Chairman of the Commission has said, the population of the Bay of Islands is twenty thousand. That is thirty-three thousand people that this line would bring forthwith into communication with Auckland or any other part of the North Island. Trains would be able to run right through from Russell and Hokianga Harbours to Wellington. From a defence point of view, this is very important, as the eastern coast has ports that are easily accessible to an enemy, and the construction of this through railway would facilitate the rapid transportation of troops to any point that was necessary; whereas it will be years, at the present rate of construction, before the railway will be at Kaikohe going by the eastern line. The population on the western side is about five thousand in the Hobson County, and a considerable portion of that is south of this part of the country which is in dispute. I may say that during the last twelve months from Whangarei there has been entrained at the rail-head an average of about seven hundred head of cattle per month for the Waikato.

4. Are they driven to the head of the line?—Yes. Last November fifteen hundred head went away.

5. *Mr. Evans.*] Are there any cattle being shipped at Whangarei?—Some are being shipped by scows; but the uncertainty of the weather at times has a good deal to do with them not going that way.

6. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Are you aware that in other parts of the Dominion cattle are not sent by rail as freely as you would lead the Commission to believe they would be entrained here?—Perhaps they do not require to be shipped for the distance that the cattle from here do. We used to drive them from here some years ago, but we are getting away from driving now.

7. *Mr. Steadman.*] Would roads have anything to do with the mode in which cattle are sent forward to the market?—Very probably. Stock go up and down in value, and in that respect the question of roads in relation to transit has a very important bearing.

8. Is there plenty of feed on the roads between here and the south?—Yes, but it is a matter of getting quick transport.

9. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Is cattle-raising increasing in this district?—Largely.

10. Are they not going in for dairying rather more extensively than for cattle-raising?—There has been an increased activity in both.

11. *Mr. Coom.*] Where did you get the information from that about seven hundred head of cattle were shipped from the rail-head per month?—From the stock auctioneers. That, of course, refers to last year.

12. Do you know the difference in distance in the trial line by the west route to Kaikohe and by way of Whangarei?—I think the main line from the Gap by the eastern line through the Mangakahia would be six or eight miles shorter than the line by way of Whangarei.

13. Would it alter your views if you knew the distance was thirty miles shorter?—No; not for the present needs of the country. The line on the eastern side of the range has not been measured or surveyed.

14. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Do you say that this seven hundred head of cattle per month came from the Whangarei County?—No; from the Whangarei, Bay of Islands, and from part of the Hobson Counties.

15. Could you give the number of head of cattle in the district from which you can draw for export seven hundred per month?—No.

16. What interest do you think would be served by the railway going from Whangarei to McCarroll's Gap?—Revenue.

17. What revenue would be derived from the new portions of the line?—It would not be from the new line, but from the portion already constructed, from Whangarei northwards.

18. Could you give us any idea of the places that would be touched on the route?—Waikiekie, Maungakaramea, Kioreroa.

19. Your objection to the more central line seems to be that it might be years before it is completed?—That is a strong reason. There is also the matter of the sparse population on the route at the present time.

20. Is it not a fact that nearly all the population of Hobson County is north of McCarroll's Gap?—If a line was taken east and west of the Gap, I do not think that would be so.

21. Do you know the distance from Kirikopuni to Auckland?—About 130 miles.

22. What is the fare?—130d. second class, single.

23. Do you know the fare at present from Helensville to Dargaville?—About that, I think.

24. *Mr. Becroft.*] If the western route was adopted, would that divert much of the trade now converging into Whangarei and going to Auckland by steamer?—Yes, to a certain extent. Waikiekie is in the happy position of being on either route.

25. What number of cattle went by way of Whangarei?—I have no idea, but there were a good few. Scows trade here pretty often.

26. *The Chairman.*] Are you dealing in cattle?—No, but I raise, and necessarily handle, a good number.

27. Where did you get the information from that you are giving us?—From one of the auctioneers.

28. Which one?—Wilson and Wilson.

29. Will one of the firm be a witness?—Probably.

30. You cannot say yourself where the cattle came from?—From the district around Whangarei and the north.

31. As far as the far north?—Decidedly.

32. Those from the far north would then have driven about 250 miles before they reached the rail-head?—If right from the far north they would.

33. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] You do not think there is a danger in times of war in the railways being too near the coast?—This railway will be far enough away to be out of danger.

34. What special advantages would the Whangarei branch afford in the time of war?—Russell is a very simple port for an enemy to enter, and if there was trouble there troops could be rapidly sent to that port by rail.

JAMES MILLER KILLEN examined. (No. 4.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are a barrister and solicitor in Whangarei, and an ex-Mayor of this town?—Yes. I have resided about twenty-eight years in the district, and am acquainted with the different routes of this proposed railway. I indorse almost every word the last witness, Mr. McCarroll, said, but I do not agree with the greater part of Mr. Mackenzie's evidence. As to Mr. Carruth's evidence, I agree with the greater part of it, but I differ from three statements he made. I think he misled the Commission as to the freights between Auckland and Whangarei. He said they were 7s. 6d. a ton. That is true as to the freight between Auckland

and the town wharf of Whangarei, but it does not include the wharfage dues, which increase the freight considerably. The freight by the "Ngapuhi," the steamer that carries the goods from Auckland for up-country, is 12s. 6d. a ton to Whangarei. The tonnage entered at the Port of Whangarei, as given in the Year-book for 1909, was 143,934 tons, while for Kaipara Harbour, it was 139,658 tons. For outward traffic for 1909 the tonnage for Whangarei was 86,553, while for Kaipara it was only 9,098.

2. *Mr. Ronayne.*] The Kaipara figures could not possibly include timber?—My figures are taken from the Year-book, and speak for themselves. Mr. Carruth said further that the question of the east or west route was one solely for engineers. I do not think it is, as there are other questions to be considered besides that of construction, such as the population likely to be served by the railway, the quantity of goods likely to be carried, &c. I also disagree with Mr. Carruth's statement that the Trunk line should be as short as possible, as in some cases the shortest possible route would be the dearest and most inconvenient to the people generally. Where the population is thickest the railways ought to be taken, as there they are most likely to pay. If the Trunk line is to take the shortest route, more time would be lost to many in getting from the north to Auckland, in travelling to catch the train, than there would be if you had ten miles more of line to travel by. The conditions at Home are a proof of my contention, and I defy any one to mention any railway in the Old County that terminates other than in a town. There is a railway from Glasgow to Loch Lomond, but there is none throughout the Trossachs, or the country from the Trossachs to the Clyde. In the north of Ireland there is a town at the extremity of the Ards Peninsula of about ten thousand population. A railway goes across the north of that peninsula, and another line goes to Down-Patrick, but there is none from Fortaferry to Newtonard. The people there wanted a light line made through the Ards Peninsula, which is a thickly populated and highly cultivated district, but the authorities would not construct it because they reckoned there was not enough population to support it. Here it is suggested that a railway should be made to Pakotai, a hamlet containing one boardinghouse and a store. In my opinion there is not enough population in that district to support a railway, and will not be for years to come. Three routes are suggested for the railway you are considering—the western route, the eastern route, and a route which, instead of following either the western or the eastern routes, would junction with the Whangarei line by a line from McCarroll's Gap. Mr. Mackenzie confounded the eastern route with the western route. There is this difference: The western route goes to the west of the Tangihua Range, and then goes up the Mangakahia Valley; while the eastern route goes through the Mangakahia Valley, but instead of going to the west of the Tangihua Range, it goes through Waikiekie and Maungakaramea, along the eastern side of that range, and if connected with the existing line, would serve the Town of Whangarei, which is the most populous town in the north, having about three thousand people. The population of the County of Whangarei is seven thousand. The town and county have a population of about ten thousand; while Hobson County, the only other county interested in this question, has, including the Town of Dargaville, about five thousand only. A considerable portion of the five thousand dwell on the western side of Kaipara Harbour, and 1,050 live in the Borough of Dargaville. There are other small hamlets on the western side of the Wairoa River. I submit that all those people, for traffic purposes, should be eliminated from the calculation altogether. Then, again, the Wairoa River itself is a far better highway than any railway likely to be built in New Zealand for years to come. If I lived in Dargaville, and wanted to go to Auckland, I would prefer to take the steamer to Helensville, and then the train to Auckland, to going by railway along the eastern bank of the river. If the line were built to the west, not only is there but a small number of people to be served, but those to the east will be excluded from using it altogether. I think those people who reside in Hobson County to the west of the Tangihuas could be admirably served by putting a short branch line through from McCarroll's Gap. As to the line further north, between the Tangihua Range and the Wairoa River, there is merely a strip of land to be considered, and part of it is deeply flooded during certain seasons of the year. Although open for European settlement for years, it contains now but a scanty population. Another reason why the railway should not go to the west is that the country there is in the hands of large landowners, and is not closely settled, while the land on the eastern side is settled in small areas. I think the eastern route is by far the most preferable, and the line ought to go to the east of the Tangihua Range and up the Mangakahia Valley. The time will come when this valley must be opened up, but it might be done now more cheaply than by making a railway. The whole of the wants of the country could be met by junctioning the present line from Whangarei to Kawakawa with the Trunk line at McCarroll's Gap. This line could for the time being be made a portion of the Main Trunk line, and then the people in the north would be better served, and have a railway twenty years earlier than they are likely to have one if it were continued on by either the eastern or western routes. The following are the statistics for the Hobson and Whangarei Counties for 1909: Cattle—Hobson County, 19,912; Whangarei, 40,046. Horses—Hobson County, 2,255; Whangarei County, 5,273. Grass lands not previously ploughed—Hobson County, 68,987 acres; Whangarei County, 131,072 acres. Dairy cows—Hobson County, 3,288; Whangarei County, 12,573. Butter is chiefly carried by rail, and no doubt the factories would want the quickest facilities for getting the butter to the cool-stores. Hobson County had 156 acres in orchards; Whangarei County, 1,060 acres. In sheep, Hobson County had perhaps 5,000 more sheep than Whangarei County. Having to carry cattle by water is very detrimental to the cattle traffic. I have known of a great number of fat cattle having to be thrown overboard on a voyage to Auckland, while not long ago a flock of sheep shipped at Auckland reached Whangarei almost skeletons. In the case of another flock shipped from Auckland to here, one-third died on the way, and another one-third perished shortly after landing. People will prefer to travel their stock by rail to sending

it by sea. These are my reasons for rejecting the western route in favour of the eastern by means of a junction with the present Whangarei line, and making that for the time being the main trunk line. It would also save the expenditure of a million, while the revenue it would return would certainly be more than the revenue likely to be derived from any line made up the Mangakahia Valley, for years to come. You would also have a line made up the Mangakahia Valley competing with the existing line, which it strikes at Kaikohe. The western side only requires the construction of a portion of line north of Kaihu, and all the wants of the undeveloped portion of that country could be met by extending the Kaihu Valley line to Rawene and the Hokianga; but to take the railway across the Wairoa River to junction with Dargaville would be folly.

3. *Mr. Evans.*] What route do you prefer?—The existing route, junctioning with the Main Trunk line at the most suitable point. I am not prepared to say whether it should be at McCarroll's Gap or at a point further north. As the line has been made, I approve of its being further utilised, but I do not approve of the position it is in.

4. *Mr. Ronayne.*] What is your opinion regarding the possibilities of the land on the western side as against that on the eastern route?—I do not think that the country to the west of the Tangihua is ever likely to become populous, partly because the river-flats are likely to be flooded, and the rest of the country is hilly and unsuitable for close settlement.

5. Are not those flats used at the present time for dairying?—They are used for grazing; I do not know about dairying.

6. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] You urged that railway-lines should go to the centres, and quoted the Home railways: Are you not aware that the English railways are run to produce dividends rather than to open up country?—I know that some of them do not produce dividends, while others that go to the centres of population do.

7. Is it your opinion that no railway should be constructed which will not immediately pay?—I do not say that at all.

8. Is it not a wise policy to construct railways in this part of the north in order to develop the country yet unsettled?—It is, and I think the construction of this railway on the lines I suggest would do it, especially if branch lines were built away from Whangarei into other parts of the north.

9. Supposing a line were constructed through the central route, where would you think would be the best place for it to junction with Whangarei?—If it junctions from Mangakahia it means a long journey to Auckland; if it junctions to the south it cuts Whangarei out of all benefit. From the north it would mean inflicting great injury on the business people.

10. What about a junction straight out with Whangarei in the north?—It would be more costly, and not as desirable as the connection I have advocated. I should prefer to see the junction I have advocated, and the one with Mangakahia and the district to the west met by putting in either electric trams or branch lines from this district into Whangarei.

11. You referred to floods?—Yes, on the low-lying lands between the Tangihua Range and the Wairoa River. I understand that on one occasion cattle were found drowned by the flood, and the carcasses were resting 20 ft. up the trees. I heard that. I never suggested that it was a frequent thing, but I understand that it is usual for a great portion of the country on the river-banks to be flooded.

12. Have you ever been there in flood times?—No.

13. *Mr. Steadman.*] You stated that the land on the western route was held mostly in private hands?—Yes.

14. Do you confine your reference to that part which lies between McCarroll's Gap and on to Kirikopuni?—I understand that it is private land, the greater part being held by large land-owners.

15. *Mr. Becroft.*] Are you aware that the flooded lands on the western side are some of the best dairy districts in the country?—Yes.

15A. And that it is in only occasional floods that the stock were found in the tops of the trees?—Yes.

16. You mentioned the heavy freight-charges on goods in the case of the sparsely settled district of Tangiteroria: does not that seem a good reason why they should not be increased?—The settlers there do not send their goods to Whangarei on that account.

17. Then, again, you intimated that the intention of extending this line to Grahamtown is for the fixed purpose of connecting with the Main Trunk line?—Not with Grahamtown. I said that it was taken down the western side of the river with the intention of junctioning with the Main Trunk line. That would be a good reason for building it where it has been built. It would be the only good reason for doing so.

18. *The Chairman.*] You remarked that if a line were constructed through Mangakahia one line would be competing with the other: can I draw the inference that you are opposed to the construction of the central route?—No; but I think it would be desirable that the country should be opened up, and possibly the line could be taken further north than Kaikohe, so as to tap the north.

19. But I am dealing with the south at present: would it not be unnecessary so long as the Whangarei gap was completed to go through the Mangakahia?—I do not think so; I think it would be very desirable to put a light railway or tram-line up the Mangakahia for a certain distance.

20. Do you advocate the connection with Whangarei, and the abandonment of the Mangakahia, on account of the population at the Whangarei end?—On account of the population, and the existence of the present railway, and the additional convenience it would afford to the people in the north.

21. Do you advocate that the Hokianga people should be compelled for all time to send their goods some thirty miles along the railway unnecessarily?—Not for all time, and perhaps not for a great many years. As soon as the population warranted it I would advocate the construction of this railway into Mangakahia as far as it was wanted.

22. You consider that the population will some day justify the construction of that railway into the Mangakahia?—I do not know that I can conjure up a population in the district that would justify it from a paying point of view; but if a few minerals were discovered no doubt it would pay right away. You can disregard the timber traffic, as it would be far cheaper to send it down by water.

23. Then, if this railway connection were made between Whangarei and the Gap the country would not be justified in putting the central route through unless minerals were found?—Not at present.

24. Does the quality of the land around Mangakahia lead you to expect that it will eventually carry a sufficient population to justify the railway?—Not for many years to come.

25. There is a large area of land along the central route?—Yes, but a great portion of it is very hilly.

26. Are you referring to Tutamoe?—Yes.

27. Which end do you refer to?—The valley is the only good part of it. There are some bits there that are good, but not all; the hills are not suitable for agriculture. I should say that a considerable portion would be suitable for dairying.

28. Have you been to Waimatanui?—No; my impression is gained from surveyors and settlers who have taken up farms there.

29. Have you been through the Mangakahia?—A portion of it, to the bridge. I have not been to Pakotai.

30. Then, you are basing your opinion on what you hear?—Not altogether, but on what I know of the farms there.

31. How are the settlers getting on there as farmers?—Some of them are getting on very well, and others are struggling.

32. You made the remark that a Main Trunk line should not go on as quickly as possible to its terminus?—I should not say that. If there is a populous terminus it might be desirable to make the Main Trunk line as soon as possible. To make it terminate at a place like Pakotai is absurd.

33. The objective is the same?—I do not admit that, because the objective of this railway is a point on the Hokianga River, which the population have access to by boat.

34. The objective is the same, Hokianga being the northern terminus and Auckland the southern. Do you say that the Main Trunk line from Hokianga to Auckland should not go by the quickest route?—Not necessarily, but it ought to diverge for a reasonable distance in order to tap the centres of population.

35. Do you realize that every diversion from the direct route means an additional freight-charge for people living at either extremity, and will necessarily cost them more to put their produce on the market?—It may be so, but they are in the minority. Are you going to take the railway straight in order to accommodate fifty people at Horeke, while there are three thousand people at Whangarei?

36. The objective is the same, and I think your argument does not apply. You still maintain that the Main Trunk line should not be built as direct as possible?—Not necessarily.

JAMES HARRISON examined. (No. 5.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a storekeeper at Whangarei, and have been here since 1875.

2. Would you like to make a statement to the Commission?—I have travelled over the route from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei several times, and I know the country pretty well. I have also some knowledge of the central route, but I do not know much about the western route. I am impressed with the advantage of linking up the present railway with Whangarei and the north rather than of expressing myself against the other routes. If the link were completed as quickly as possible it would be the means of increasing very largely the revenue from the line already constructed, and I am sure it would prove a commercial success. It taps the largest centre of population in the north. The country between McCarroll's Gap and the constructed portion at Whangarei is favourable for constructional work, and can be dealt with at comparatively small expense. I have nothing to say against the other lines being constructed later on, but I presume what is being sought now is what is the most profitable line to construct at once, and which line would confer the greatest benefit on the greatest number. The connection between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap would greatly enhance the earning-power of the line from Whangarei, both north and south, increasing the value of the land, and enabling it to be fully utilized. As to the Mangakahia line, it is looked upon here as one which would have the greatest claim to be constructed at a later period, but that part of the country could be cheaply served by electric trams. No doubt in the next few years there will be a great development in this direction.

3. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What are the freights from Auckland to Whangarei?—7s. 6d. a ton, with 1s. a ton wharfage.

4. What is the cost of the transport of goods from Whangarei to Maungakaramea?—In the summer about 1s. per hundredweight, and in the winter about 1s. 6d.

5. Could goods be carried by rail from Auckland to Maungakaramea as cheaply as by steamer to Whangarei, and carted out?—Yes, certain classes of goods, such as potatoes, chaff, grain, and manures.

DONALD WILLIAM JACK examined. (No. 6.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am in business in Whangarei as a draper, and have been for the last thirteen years. I hold no public position at the present time, but I have been a member of the Borough Council. There is not much left for me to say in connection with the matter before the Commission, excepting to indorse the evidence given by former witnesses, especially that by Mr. Killen. I am in favour of the immediate connection from the Whangarei-Kaikohe line with the Main Trunk line at the nearest point to McCarroll's Gap. There is just one argument which I think is being omitted in connection with this proposed linking-up. I do not consider that the main object of a line of railway should be so much the bringing into touch of the few terminal points as the serving of a district, by way of intermediate stations, through which the railway runs. If the line runs through the centre of the islands it will not touch, so far as I know, any of the distributing centres. By a line connecting McCarroll's Gap with Whangarei we have the whole of the north brought into touch with Kawakawa and Whangarei as distributing centres, and places which are easily accessible for the distributing of goods coming in from outside. A good deal has been said with regard to the freights between Auckland and here, but it has to be remembered that a large proportion of the goods that would be landed here by steamer would be distributed per medium of the railway, and therefore be revenue-producing to the railway. On the other hand, if the central route only was to be undertaken, there would be no seaport distributing centre except that of Auckland, which is a long distance away.

2. *Mr. Steadman.*] The goods that at present come from the south by way of Auckland would come to Whangarei wharf, and, if this railway connection to the main line was made, would be distributed from here by rail southwards towards McCarroll's Gap?—Yes; and it is expected that before many years to come Home vessels will be coming here at Whangarei and delivering their imports direct instead of at Auckland, which will cheapen the cost all round.

WHANGAREI, WEDNESDAY, 12TH APRIL, 1911.

GEORGE COPPIN MARSHALL examined. (No. 7.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am a storekeeper, residing in Whangarei. I have been in Whangarei for nineteen years, and at the present time am President of the Chamber of Commerce. The statement that I desire to make to the Commission is purely from the commercial aspect of the question before you. I am not in a position to give any evidence regarding the eastern or the western route, but I think, as a commercial undertaking, at the present time a branch line from Whangarei to as near McCarroll's Gap as the main line can be conveniently junctioned with would be in the best interests of the eastern part of the north. When I say the north I mean the Bay of Islands County and the Whangarei County, and the best interests of all that country can be best served for many years to come by this connection. It will not only suit the most populous part of the north, and the part that is likely to be the most populous for many years to come, but the exports from the east coast ports are considerably in advance of anything that can be shown on the western coast. What will occur in the future, of course, I cannot say, but I would ask this question: If you were a syndicate desirous of developing the north, would you run a line straight through this peninsula, or would you use the existing lines by making a junction between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei? I think, taking all circumstances into consideration, as well as the question of defence, you would join up with the Gap at once; and I also think you would probably put a line to the head-waters of the Wairoa later on, or perhaps simultaneously with the present proposed closing of the southern gap. As shown by previous witnesses, we have the largest population in all the northern counties, and I think that would tell with the average business person as a matter of revenue and the general use for the public. The coal to come from the partly developed coal areas in the Whangarei and Bay of Islands Counties would go from Whangarei by rail to beyond the Gap. It might be urged against that that there would be competition with coal from Auckland, but I contend that Whangarei as a distributing centre would be able to supply coal just as cheaply as coal railed from Waikato to within thirty or forty miles of Whangarei. That would be a considerable revenue for the railway. This part of the country is also one of the best adapted for dairying purposes. The industry is only in its infancy, but the butter exported from Whangarei last year was between 440 and 500 tons, and I maintain that that butter would be taken by rail, in preference to steamer, from Whangarei to Auckland. My reason for saying that the butter export will go by rail in preference to steamer is this: I have been told on very good authority that the Railway Department at the present time is carrying butter for the same distance from Thames Valley as from Whangarei, right into the freezing-chambers, for one-half of the present steamer-charge on butter from here to Auckland. The present steamer-charge is 6d. a box, or £1 a ton. In addition to the benefit arising from the cheaper cost of carriage, there is the fact that by rail the butter is taken direct to the freezing-chamber, without any further expense to the producer or handling of the butter. At present the steamer lands the butter on the wharf at Auckland, and there is a wharfage-charge, and there is also cartage from the wharf to the freezer, which has to be added to the transit charge. There is also the fact that during the best butter months the climate here is considerably hotter than elsewhere, and, although I know that some of the steamers are equipped with freezing apparatus, still the train gives the quicker despatch. With the train there is no waiting about for the tide. Another reason why there should be a junction with the Gap as speedily as possible is that there is no harbour fit for any extensive traffic between Auckland and Whangarei. Another reason is that the settlers living at Waikiekie and further north would get

their goods cheaper by rail from Whangarei as a distributing centre than by rail 120 miles from Auckland. Then, again, it is almost decided that ere long Whangarei will be supplied with electric power. That will mean that industries will crop up, and that Whangarei will be in a better position than Auckland to supply the wants of the north. Such lines as grain and flour and potatoes have all to be supplied from the south, and there is no doubt that very shortly there will be a direct boat from the south to Whangarei—it has already been tried and proved successful—and the Whangarei people are looking to the deep-water extension of the railway to Grahamtown to have these heavy goods landed at Whangarei. That means that Whangarei would then be in a position to supply that class of goods to the south for at least thirty or forty miles just as cheaply as they could be sent from Auckland. If the line were completed through to Whangarei it would also be used by tourists as a quick way to the north. It is well known that the Bay of Islands, with its beautiful harbour, is one of the best holiday resorts that can be found. Hitherto the tourists have not been able to get direct communication with it, and are not prepared to undertake the long water-journey to get there. Another thing in that respect is that the tourists would be able to break their journey to the Bay of Islands to visit the places of interest and attraction *en route*. I support the view that the linking-up of Whangarei with the main line is essential for defence purposes. The cable station at Doubtless Bay is absolutely unprotected, and in the event of war the defence of the north would be incalculably benefited by a through line from Auckland and Wellington to the east-coast ports. Another argument that should be of first consideration is the fact that in five years' time the Panama Canal will be nearing completion, and it has been frequently said that there will be considerable traffic, both tourist and otherwise, to the Bay of Islands by that route; in fact, the steamers could land their mails and passengers there and send them direct by rail to Auckland. Another point is that the north is one of the principal fruit-producing parts of the Dominion, and it is only in its infancy. The Department of Agriculture realizes that. A considerable quantity of fruit would be carried by railway to Auckland and further south. The question of the transit of cattle has been sufficiently brought under your notice, but I may say I have the assurance of one of the principal auctioneers in this town that last November one man alone shipped five hundred head of cattle. They were driven to the rail-head, and there entrained and carried on to Te Awamutu in twenty-four hours, which he assures me could not be done in a month by driving or sending by boat to Auckland. I think that only goes to show that it is quite true what other gentlemen have said in that respect. Then, again, the Bay of Islands and Whangarei have the same interests. The Bay of Islands is long settled, and has not advanced as it would have done if it had had better communication with the other centres. In conclusion, I cannot lay too much stress on the point that Whangarei is sure to be the distributing centre because of its splendid port, and it only needs the connection with McCarroll's Gap to make it the distributing centre for the north. The arguments brought forward with regard to defence, I think, go a long way to show that there should be that connection. The same argument does not apply to the west coast of the island because of the fact of the bar harbours.

2. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Are you aware that butter is sent from New Plymouth, Patea, Wanganui, and Foxton by steamer, and that practically the railways carry no butter to Wellington, and that the climatic conditions are practically similar to what you have here?—No, I am not; but I think it is a fact that the butter from the Thames Valley is railed to Auckland instead of by water carriage as could be the case.

3. May that not be because they have not the shipping facilities?—It may be.

4. Are you aware that a large number of steamers trading between New Plymouth and Wellington convey the butter direct not to the freezing-chamber at Wellington, but to the ship's side for shipment to London?—I think as the country develops that will take place at Auckland too, by rail, if it is not already done. I may have made a mistake in using the term "freezer," instead of "to the ship's side," by rail, from Whangarei to Auckland.

5. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Do you advocate the central line?—I do not know the country sufficiently to advocate that route.

6. You assume that there will be a central line?—Yes, in the course of time.

7. Is it not a fact that Whangarei has started on the establishment of freezing-works?—I understand that they are not going on with them. The scheme is almost abandoned.

8. Have not buildings been erected at considerable cost?—I believe they have.

9. Can you give us any idea of the cost?—No.

10. If they are gone on with, the hope of Whangarei is that the direct boats will call at Whangarei?—That may occur in the future, but I do not think myself it will be for a very long time.

11. Do you not think that if tourists came by McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei they would miss the main scenic points of beauty?—No. Although I have not been to the west-coast harbours, I think the Bay of Islands takes a lot of beating.

12. *Mr. Becroft.*] As a business man, have you ever thought of the possibility of the present trade of Whangarei being diverted by direct communication by railway with Auckland?—I do not think there is any possibility of the trade being diverted from Whangarei, because, as I stated before, I consider that Whangarei will in the near future be equal as a distributing centre to what Auckland is at the present time.

13. Whangarei will be a rival to Auckland?—It will certainly be a rival in the distribution of heavy lines, such as flour, grain, potatoes, &c.

14. Have you ever been in the Mangakahia Valley?—As far as the Houto.

15. Have you travelled through the Mangakahia Valley to Kaikohe?—No.

16. Have you seen the country lying between Mangakahia and the Tutamoe?—Only what is to be seen from the Houto, if any.

17. You have not been further north than the Houto in the Mangakahia Valley?—No.

ALEXANDER GORDON MACKENZIE examined. (No. 8.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, residing at Otonga. I am Chairman of the Whangarei County Council. I live on the Whangarei-Kawakawa line.

2. Would you make a statement to the Commission?—I think that the Main Trunk line should be connected with the Whangarei-Kawakawa line by way of McCarroll's Gap, as being the best in the interests of the Dominion and of the settlers in the north. In the first place, the settlers of the north would then have communication with the outside world, and it would be years and years before they got it if they had to wait for the central line to be finished. In the second place, by the time the railway is completed to McCarroll's Gap I have no doubt that the other end will be pretty well on to Hokianga, which is close on a hundred miles of railway that the Dominion would save by making the connection here. If the Government wishes to open up the country, there is nothing easier than to run a branch electric line right up from the Whangarei-McCarroll's Gap section to the Mangakahia Valley. By making the connection with the Whangarei-Kawakawa section there is no doubt that it would relieve the local bodies a great deal, and also the settlers. In the winter time the settlers are not able to get their goods to their homesteads, but with the connection here Whangarei would be a distributing centre, and it would relieve not only the ratepayer but the Government a great deal in connection with the roads and bridges, which are not in a good state at the present time, I am sorry to say. There is another point I would like to impress on the Commission: Are two lines run through this narrow peninsula going to pay? We have one line now, which was at one time supposed to be the Main Trunk line of railway to the north; in fact, I believe it was part of Sir Julius Vogel's scheme. It was surveyed then as the Main Trunk line. I believe that is why the line has now been continued down to the present deep-water wharf at Grahamtown; otherwise the line would have gone on the other side of the river, as it should have done.

3. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Your opinion is that there is not sufficient country in this peninsula to enable both the present line and the proposed central line to pay?—That is so.

4. *Mr. Coom.*] What would be the length of this electric line up the Mangakahia Valley?—About thirty miles. They say they can construct such lines for £2,000 per mile.

5. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Can you tell us the distance from the Whangarei-Kawakawa Railway to the coast on the east?—About fifteen miles, as the crow flies, at one portion of it.

6. What would be the distance from the line to the west coast?—I could not say.

7. When you spoke of the peninsula as being narrow, had you in your mind the remark of Mr. Massey when he said that he "came to look for a peninsula and found a continent"?—If he travelled over it he would find it a continent all right.

8. You called it a narrow strip?—I think it is a narrow strip in which to run two railways side by side. They might pay in the course of time, but not in our day.

9. Have you anything to suggest as a means of communication for those who would not be on the line?—Roads to the stations.

10. *Mr. Steadman.*] Do you know the proportion of population on ten miles on either side of the line you advocate compared with a similar area on the western line?—I do not; but I know it is thickly populated on the eastern side compared with the west.

11. Have you been over the country to the west of the line?—I have never been through the Mangakahia Valley, but I have been over most of the western country.

12. *Mr. Becroft.*] What authority have you for the statement that the present line to Grahamtown was made with the intention of joining the section with the main line?—I have no particular authority.

13. You made, I think, the statement that the central route would not be more than ten miles in the interior from the Whangarei-Kawakawa line. Looking on the map, would you still say so, bearing in mind that you say it is thirty miles from Whangarei to Mangakahia?—I did not say in a direct line.

14. How far is it by road from Mangakahia to Whangarei?—I do not know the distance, but I believe it is twenty-eight miles.

15. Have you travelled through the Mangakahia to Kaikohe?—No.

16. You have not seen what land lies between Mangakahia and Tutamoe?—No.

CHARLES ERNEST RANDOLF MACKESY examined. (No. 9.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—I am a resident of Whangarei. I am a land agent and farmer. I should like to say that my evidence is off my own bat. I know the country fairly well, and I give evidence in support of the greatest good to the greatest number in the shortest time. I believe that once you pass the gorge beyond Parakao in the Mangakahia Valley it would hardly pay at the present time to put a railway through, on account of the scarcity of settlers. It is always better that the country to be opened up by railways should be agricultural country. That country is under heavy bush, and will be sparsely settled for a long time to come. Later on perhaps it could be easily served by an electric line. In looking over the Railways Statement I find that it is not always the best land that gives the best returns to the railway. Although there is good land on the Dargaville-Kaihu line, that line only pays 1s. 6d. per cent., whereas the Whangarei line, which is running through poor country, is paying £9 6s. per cent. It is paying that now. I find that the Gisborne line, which has the same distance of railway as Whangarei, has only given a return of £2 9s. 3d. per cent., and, if I mistake not, the line is running through most excellent country. Although the Whangarei line is now paying £9 6s. per cent., I believe that that return will shortly be cut down by reason of the extra mileage that is shortly to be added. The added revenue will not be in proportion to that at present being derived over the shorter line from the coalfields. There are, however, other coalfields to be opened up, and also

large areas of timber land. If I am right in my surmise that the revenue per mile will come down if you connect Whangarei with McCarroll's Gap, which I advocate, I think the line would still pay more than the Gisborne line per cent. on construction. In addition to being a good revenue-producer—I would put the amount one-half of the present return, say, £4 13s. per cent.—it would answer as the Main Trunk until such time as the settlement of the Mangakahia warranted a line being put through there. Railways must be served by water-ways. It is the same all the world over. Another fact that speaks for the advancement of this district is the number of agricultural implements that are coming in. Almost every day one can see some new machinery on the wharf. The dairying industry is only now coming to the front, and the settlers are becoming more and more alive to the fact that instead of surface-sowing it is better to have the ground turned over and grass put in and winter crops raised. Then there is another aspect. All over the world people are looking forward to a coming struggle, and a main consideration is strategical roads and railways. In New Zealand we have not bothered about it, but it is a proposition that should come before the Commission. If Whangarei were linked up with the main line at McCarroll's Gap it would make a good strategical line for North Auckland. It would enable quick mobilization. The Bay of Islands is a magnificent harbour, and we have a good one here, and with this gap linked up we would have quick direct communication with the headquarters at Auckland. Again, the cable-station is at Doubtless Bay, and it is necessary that that should be protected.

2. *Mr. Romayne.*] Are you aware that the Gisborne line at the time the Railways Statement was issued had a comparatively short mileage, and that there was an excellent road between the termini?—I only quoted the railway return as to the revenue earned; and twenty-three miles is given as the length of the Gisborne line and twenty-three miles for the Whangarei line.

3. Are you aware that when they were working the bush on the Kaihu Railway that line paid a high dividend for many years?—Yes. That was good kauri bush then; but until the land has got into good bearing-capacity it will not pay so well.

4. It is your opinion that when the line from Whangarei is connected with the main line the return of £9 6s. per cent. will be reduced?—Yes, unless we connect with the Main Trunk.

5. Could you give the Commission any idea of the millions of feet of timber that would be brought in to the railway?—No, I cannot give the figures, because those I got from others are not conclusive. Not long ago I wanted to secure for some southern people 100,000,000 ft. of millable timber and could not; but I find out that there is a tremendous quantity of timber to come down over this railway.

6. Are you aware that 100,000,000 ft. of timber would be equal to two years' export from the Port of Greymouth?—No.

7. *Mr. Steadman.*] Have you been through the gorge from Parakao to Kaikohe?—Yes.

8. What is the nature of the country?—Heavy bush.

9. Is it broken country?—Yes.

10. *The Chairman.*] Did you ascertain what amount of timber there was in the Ramarama Valley on the railway-line?—No.

11. Are you not aware that every tree was marked and measured by the Commissioner of Crown Lands two or three years ago?—I did not go to the Government about the matter, but I inquired from others.

12. You say the railway is not going to pay north of Hukerenui?—I said it was possible that the return per cent. would be cut down from what it is at present; but if you connect Whangarei *via* McCarroll's Gap, or thereabouts, with the Main Trunk line this difficulty would in all likelihood be non-existent; in any case, the line would still pay handsomely.

DAVID MILLER examined. (No. 10.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, and sometimes a flax-miller, residing at Mangapai, about sixteen miles from Whangarei. I know the country well from here to McCarroll's Gap, and I advocate that the line should be put through there as soon as possible. It is a very easy country through which to make a railway, and there are settlers right through. I think the Main Trunk line should eventually go by the western route. The great bulk of the population is on the eastern side at present, but on the other side the land is not opened up. Ten or twelve years ago it was all in native bush. The ownership at present is too large. The first thing the Government should do is to acquire this land and cut it up into smaller holdings.

2. *Mr. Evans.*] You desire to have Whangarei brought into connection with the main line at McCarroll's Gap?—Yes.

3. And that the Main Trunk line should not be gone on with at present?—That is so. It would not be payable under existing conditions.

EDMUND CAMPBELL PURDIE examined. (No. 11.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a schoolmaster, residing at Whangarei. I have been in and out of the district for the last twenty-eight years. For five years I was Inspector of Schools in charge of Whangarei northwards, excluding Dargaville, and for three years I was Inspector of Schools in charge of the district between Auckland and Whangarei. The Wairoa was excluded in both cases. I have been to Wairoa on, I think, three occasions. I know the whole of the country from Auckland northwards fairly well, in a general way. I happen at the present time to be secretary of the North Auckland Railway League, and on that account I have had to go into the question of railway-communication between Auckland

and the north. That league was so constituted that its president was a Dargaville man and the secretary a Whangarei man. The railway problem presents itself to me in this way: If you take Kaikohe as the objective point, there are three ways of reaching it—First, by what might be called the extreme eastern route by Whangarei; secondly, by what might be called the central route to the east of the Tangihuas; and thirdly, by the central line to the west of the Tangihuas. The problem seems to me to resolve itself into this: that by two of these routes—that is, the line either to the east or the west of the Tangihuas—the distance from McCarroll's Gap to Kaikohe would be about sixty miles, whilst the distance from McCarroll's Gap to Kioreroa is twenty-seven miles. If you follow the line by making the twenty-seven-mile connection, you add to the distance of the point of objective at Kaikohe by about thirty miles. On the other hand, you bring into touch with Auckland several years in advance the whole of the Whangarei County and the whole of the Whangarei Borough, and the whole of Hokianga, and the whole of the north, and it seems to me, knowing the needs of the north fairly well, that that is the course that ought to be immediately taken. I do not want to go into the question of statistics, because after all they are only a matter of memory, and I take it that this Commission has access to data of that sort without requiring evidence from a mere looker-on. But I would suggest that whatever statistics are considered in connection with this railway question, they should include statistics of the whole of the Bay of Islands and the whole of the Whangarei County, as materially bearing upon the question. Taking the average railway construction, as far as I know it, I should say that by connecting by way of Kioreroa and McCarroll's Gap the whole of the north to Hokianga and the whole of the east will be connected with Auckland quite ten years sooner than if they wait for the line through the Mangakahia Valley to Kaikohe. At the present time, to my own knowledge, a very large number of passengers from as far north as Mangonui and as far west as the Hokianga take coach to Towai and join the train there rather than take the long water journey from Mangonui or the Bay of Islands; and when the line is through to Kaikohe, that number, I venture to say, will be very greatly increased. In my time in the north, and I believe at the present time too, all the coach-roads converged at Ohaeawai, and passed on to Kawakawa. When the line is open to Kaikohe—possibly in two years—the coaches no doubt will make Kaikohe the terminus. Now, a junction must sooner or later be made between Whangarei and the Main Trunk line proper, and I can see absolutely no reason why the railway traffic from the north to Auckland should be delayed ten years while the Main Trunk line is being constructed through the Mangakahia Valley to Kaikohe. It seems to me that from all points of view it is highly desirable to make that connection as soon as possible. The harbours on the east coast are good harbours; on the west they are poor harbours. Whatever connection we have with the outer world must be by way of the eastern harbours. A movement has been on foot in the Town of Whangarei for many years past to have their own harbour established as a port of entry, and merchants here tell me that, before many years, if trade goes on increasing at the present rate, that must come about. In that case, I take it, Whangarei will be the distributing centre for places as far south as Maungaturoto and Kaiwaka, and also for the north. In that case the connection between McCarroll's Gap and Kioreroa would very materially aid the inland settlers. Mr. Fowlds, when he was through the north, remarked that in his opinion the north would be the most closely settled district in the Dominion, and gave as his reason that the north was more capable of productiveness under intensive cultivation than any other part of New Zealand with which he was acquainted. I quite agree with that view. Dr. Findlay, when he was here, suggested that the lands, particularly between here and Kawakawa, being very cheap, were particularly well suited for fruit-growing. In that opinion I agree also. He also indicated not only that the land was suited for fruit-growing, but fitted to carry through a scheme for the utilization of prison labour for the preparation of farms to be ultimately disposed of to settlers, and that he would see to it that the north, whose climate was particularly suited for fruit-growing, should be used in that way. I have dealt with what I should call the eastern present line, and now I should like to come to the question of the central line. I have always held that a central line should be the shortest, the cheapest, and the most central. I think that the people to the north, although they would be inconvenienced for a period of, say, ten or fifteen years, by the linking-up of the Main Trunk line by way of McCarroll's Gap and Kioreroa, should not be penalized by thirty miles for all time. So that simultaneously with the construction of this connection a central line should be carried on from McCarroll's Gap to Kaikohe. That central line should, in my opinion, go to the east of the Tangihuas. I must at once say that I do not know the country to the west of the Tangihuas to anything like the extent that I know the country to the east. I hold the opinion that when the railway passes through the valley of the Mangakahia close settlement will be encouraged. I consider the Mangakahia to be the most extensive and most fertile valley in the whole of the north. I wish again to refer to statistics, not by way of giving statistics, but by way of indicating what I consider mere justice in the matter of computing statistics. I take it as an axiom and an absolutely just maxim that if statistics are considered at all, and a central line is under consideration, a straight line should be drawn through the centre of the district to be served by the railway—a straight north-and-south line—and that the statistics—population, stock, and others—should be computed from the sea-coast to the line. I make that suggestion because on a former occasion, when the eastern and western routes were under consideration, the statistics furnished as bearing upon the question excluded *in toto* the whole of the country to the east of the present Whangarei-Kawakawa line and the whole of the country for ten miles west of that line. In that way, by a simple process of manipulation, the whole of the population of the Whangarei Borough, the whole of quite twenty townships lying between Whangarei Heads and Bay of Islands, the whole of the production of a very large area, were absolutely excluded, and should, in my opinion, have been included. On

the other hand, in the computation of these statistics the railway-line between Kaihu and Dargaville was treated as an inconsiderable quantity, therefore it is only just that the straight line through the centre should be taken in computing the eastern population and other statistics, because Dargaville is a water-way. The same remark applies to this side as far as Whangarei is concerned, and if you make the connection with McCarroll's Gap, you then make it end at Whangarei, and do away with the injustice in regard to the element of computation I have indicated. Electrical power will probably before long be installed in the district, leading to the establishment of large industries in this town. I refer to the power obtainable from the Wairua Falls. Although the outlet of the Mangakahia Valley by way of the river is from Hobson County, its trade naturally falls into Whangarei.

2. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What is the membership of the Railway League embracing the north?—It has had no meeting for pretty well a year, and I do not know that it is an operative quantity. When I went into these matters the league was an active body. Mr. Harding was then president, and I was the secretary. He represented the western side, and I to some extent the eastern.

3. You made the statement that the North Auckland Railway League—so-called—was representative of the north of Auckland?—At the time I refer to it was.

4. What was their membership on the western side?—A very large one. I think the meetings were attended by ten at least. Mr. Harding on one occasion sent me a list of seven members.

5. But did they attend the meetings?—I would not say anything excepting that Mr. Harding attended, and Mr. Alfred Harding also attended, and some gentlemen around Whangarei.

6. Was there not at the same time another league, the Kaipara Railway League, which had no communication with your league?—I think they were coexisting at the same time.

7. I understand that your information of the western part of the Tangihua district was gained when you were an Inspector of Schools?—Yes.

8. Are there any schools on the eastern side of the river?—Not below Tangiteroria. I have not been on the actual western route, excepting as far as Waikiekie. I visited Paradise School on the west side of the river, and always journeyed to it along the eastern bank of the Wairoa to about where the line will cross. I was then ferried across, so that I know that country well.

9. *The Chairman.*] You stated that making the connection with Whangarei would give the northern people connection with Auckland ten years earlier than they would have it by way of the Main Trunk line?—Probably ten years. By the construction of the twenty-seven miles junctioning between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei there would be in actual construction a saving of thirty-three miles, and that would take probably some ten years to do.

10. You know, of course, that the vote for the North Auckland Main Trunk line is £100,000 a year, enabling them to carry out between fourteen and fifteen miles a year?—I am very glad to hear it. In that case the line should reach Whangarei in two years.

11. Yes; and in two years to Kaikohe, if the twenty-seven miles in question were added to the Main Trunk. Is that not so?—I think that is a hopeful estimate. I still consider that on the other ground—namely, of the population lying to the eastward, and in Whangarei County, and in Whangarei itself—that junction should be made.

PATRICK JOSEPH MULHERN examined. (No. 12.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am a farmer at Mangakahia, but I reside at Whangarei. I know the country pretty well through to Hokianga, and indorse Mr. Purdie's remarks in reference to distances, as there were some erroneous statements made respecting that matter. As to the western central route, the twenty-seven miles of construction that has been referred to as required in order to bring the line to here would carry the railway well into the Bay of Islands and the Hokianga district, as the central western route runs parallel with four counties. In my opinion, it would be impracticable to get to this line from Mangakahia without coming into Whangarei itself, a distance of thirty-five miles. The twenty-seven miles of construction to McCarroll's Gap would put a railway right into Hokianga and Bay of Islands, and a similar distance would connect it up with Kaikohe. And there is a large area of country on the western side of the western route which would be served—practically to the head of the present Kaihu Valley Railway, and the head of the Awakino Valley, and the whole of the Tangowahine Settlement. Also the whole of the Maungaru Block and the whole of the Karaka Block, south of that, the country lying down the Aratapu, on that side of the river, would also be served by the western route. I refer to Mitatai. Also, all the country along the Mangakahia, known as Tutamoe Survey District, would be served by that route. Several large blocks of land have been taken up there, including Houto and Tutamoe Settlements; also the country connecting with the Waimatanui, and along the valley of the Mangakahia towards Taheke. All this country would be served by the western route. It is all good grazing-country, carrying from two and a half to three sheep to the acre; and a lot of it is already being utilized for dairying purposes, six wagon-loads of cream coming from there now per week. On the right-hand side of the Mangakahia River the whole of the Hikurangi Valley would be served by this railway; also a lot of Native blocks which adjoin the Nukatawhiti Block. To bring these lands into communication with the railway between Whangarei and Kawakawa would be practically impossible without coming to Whangarei itself. As to the reported sales of stock at Whangarei, it may have been sold in Whangarei, but it was all gathered in Hokianga, Bay of Islands, and Hobson districts, and then sold and taken from here. The country along the proposed eastern route would hardly feed grasshoppers. Statistics were compiled some two years ago in connection with the proposed division of the county boundaries, which indicated the large amount of trade done in connection with the Mangakahia Valley, and why that portion of Hobson County should not be ceded to Marsden County. It was at that

time called the "big Whangarei steal." Hobson County agreed to the proposal, and allowed the portion referred to to go into Marsden County. I am in that portion which it was desired should be added to Whangarei; so that I am unbiassed on the subject. I consider that the people on the Kaihu side would have as much right to get a connection with the Main Trunk line as the people of Whangarei would, because then they would get a direct outlet to Auckland. If the Main Trunk line were constructed through the western route Whangarei could be connected with that route, and also Kaihu. By the time the line gets to Mangakahia Valley I fancy the place will be far enough advanced to cause the line to pay handsomely. As to the statement that after floods the cows have been found 20 ft. up in the trees, those trees must have been lying on the ground for the cows to get into the branches. As to the utilization of the Wairua Falls for industries, there are falls up the Mangakahia district between 300 ft. and 400 ft. high. These falls are situated in the Nukutawhiti Block.

2. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Where do you consider is the best place to connect the Kaihu Valley Railway with the Main Trunk line?—Somewhere near to Kirikopuni.

3. I think it is quite clear that the greater portion of Whangarei County would be better served by the route you suggest?—A great part would.

4. And you still maintain that it would be impossible for that portion of Whangarei County to connect with Kawakawa except by going to Whangarei itself?—Yes, except by going the other way to Kaikohe.

5. *Mr. Steadman.*] Would more than one-tenth of Whangarei County be served by the railway you refer to?—It could be.

6. Is there not only a small bit of country up there at Tangiteroria and Tangihua that would be served?—It is served.

7. Is that not on the edge of the county?—The railway-line runs between the four counties.

8. Well, how much of the Whangarei County would be served by the line?—I could not tell you, but there must be a part of each county served. There is a big extent of country to be served.

9. Do you advance as a sound proposition that water carriage is more expensive than railway carriage?—On the Wairoa side I say it is; on this side, the eastern, it is much cheaper.

10. Why is it more expensive on the Wairoa side?—Because the goods have to be taken by water first and railed afterwards.

11. What distance is it from Dargaville to Helensville?—I cannot say, but the freight is £1 12s. 6d. a ton from Auckland to Tangiteroria.

12. What is the distance the goods are carried by water in that case?—Eighty or a hundred miles.

13. How much by railway?—Thirty-six miles.

14. On which side of the river is the Tangawahine Settlement that you say would be served?—On the Dargaville side, and fifteen miles from Dargaville. That is the side the railway is going on.

15. What side is the Awakino Settlement on?—On the same side.

16. *Mr. Becroft.*] What do you advocate in lieu of the connection with Whangarei?—The thirty-five miles I speak of would carry you into so much fertile country.

17. *The Chairman.*] If the rate of progress on the Main Trunk line were not interfered with, would you be opposed to a branch line to connect Whangarei with the Main Trunk line?—No.

18. But your chief concern is that the central arterial line should be pushed on with all speed?—Yes.

19. Without any branches?—Yes.

20. But they might go on so long as the Main Trunk line was not interfered with?—Yes.

KAWAKAWA, SATURDAY, 15TH APRIL, 1911.

WILLIAM STEWART examined. (No. 13.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer and sawmiller at Kawakawa.

2. You have been occupied in most of the commercial pursuits for the past twenty years?—Yes.

3. Would you make a statement to the Commission giving your views on the question of railway construction, dealing with a central route, either east or west of the Tangihua Range, and the connecting of the isolated sections of line between Whangarei and Kawakawa and between Dargaville and Kaihu with the main line?—I consider there should be no delay in the construction of the Main Trunk line. That line should proceed by the shortest route from McCarroll's Gap to its destination at the far north. The products to be carried from the far north will be fat stock, cream, butter, early vegetables, and all the passengers. The far north does not care whether the line goes east or west of the Tangihua Range, so long as the most direct route is taken. I consider that connecting-lines should be made without delay between the Main Trunk line and the isolated system of railways on the east between Whangarei and Kawakawa, and on the west between Dargaville and Kaihu. I feel confident that when this is done, and a suitable time-table is issued, the lines will become paying propositions.

4. *Mr. Evans.*] Have you been over this country?—A good deal of it: I have been to Papanui and Matakohē; and, of course, I am acquainted with Maungaturoto, Waipu, McCarroll's Gap, and Waikikie.

5. *Mr. Coom.*] Will there be any timber or gum from the far north?—I do not like to say anything about the timber. There will be a lot of timber, but whether it will pay to send it by rail for such a long distance I am not prepared to say. It depends on the freight. Timber can generally be carried by water at a lower freight than by rail, whereas with perishable goods it is safest to send them by the quickest route.

6. Do you know the population that would avail themselves of the railway from Kaikohe southwards—the population north of Hokianga River?—There are about twenty thousand in the electorate, including Natives, and that is all I can say.

7. How would this district of Kawakawa be affected by the east central route being constructed as compared with a connection between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap?—I am looking forward to the junction between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei being made before anything else. When that is done we will have direct communication with Auckland.

8. Which would suit Kawakawa better—that or the direct line to the north?—It appears to us that we would have earlier connection with Auckland if lined up at Whangarei with the main line. By the other way, with the present rate of progress, it looks as if we would have to wait for the next twenty years before we have a railway through to Auckland.

9. Which would you advocate as a preference—a junction between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei, or the main line brought through to Kaikohe, with a junction at this end?—The junction from Whangarei to McCarroll's Gap.

10. Why?—Because it would give the earliest connection.

11. At which end would you suggest the connection should be made with the Dargaville-Kaihu Railway and the Main Trunk line?—I am not in a position to say, not having been over the route further than Matakoho.

12. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Your object is that the line should go farther north ultimately?—Yes.

13. Considering that point, where do you suggest would be the best place for a junction with Hokianga and Kaikohe?—Three miles from Kaikohe is the only place the lines could cross.

14. Why?—We are led to believe by the engineers that that is the most convenient spot, owing to the configuration of the country.

15. Do you think that the Whangarei-Kaikohe junction would be the best for opening up the country for settlement?—Yes. It would be necessary to construct a few roads as feeders. The Mangakahia is a good water-way.

16. Have you ever seen it?—No.

17. *Mr. Steadman.*] Taking the country right to the north from McCarroll's Gap on both sides, where does the largest population lie—to the east or west of the Tangihua Range?—To the east, I should say.

18. If Whangarei was connected with McCarroll's Gap would it open up the northern lands?—Yes. I think more passengers would use the railway. It is often quoted that passengers prefer the railway to water travelling.

19. *Mr. Becroft.*] Are you familiar with the two routes, to the east and west of the Tangihuas?—No.

20. You made the statement that the far north does not care whether the Main Trunk line goes to the east or the west?—Yes.

21. It would suit Kawakawa better to have the line go by way of Whangarei to McCarroll's Gap?—Yes.

22. Are you aware of the difference in distance between linking up with the eastern or the western route?—No.

HARRY CLOUGH BLUNDELL examined. (No. 14.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am Clerk and Engineer to the Bay of Islands County.

2. Will you make a statement regarding the subject-matter of the inquiry of the Commission?—I have heard the evidence given by Mr. Stewart, and, as far as the central route is concerned, I have very little to add. I agree with him that it is immaterial to the north which route is taken. We want the most direct route to Auckland. It is of great importance to us that a connection should be made between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap at the earliest possible moment. One of the chief reasons is that, as the Commission is aware, we have the finest harbour in the north, where ocean-going vessels can enter at any time. We have a coalfield already between here and Whangarei. They are prospecting for further seams, and there is little question that the same field extends right through to Hikurangi. Coal has been found in several places already in fair quantities. I may say that the prospecting that has been done has been on a small scale. We have applied several times for the use of the Government's diamond drill, but it has not been sent up. The prospecting has been done by private persons, and it has led us to believe that coal exists. I mention this to show that in the event of war men-of-war could come into the Bay of Islands and get coal, and also get coal or stores from Auckland when the line is put through. Not many years ago the Union Company's boats used to come into Russell and Opua for supplies of oysters for Sydney, and they took in coal at the same time. If the railway connection were made with Auckland, I think it is quite conceivable that large vessels, such as the Frisco boats, would call at Bay of Islands, and land passengers and mails, take in coal, and go on to Sydney, and thus save twenty-four hours' steaming. That, I understand, with a mail-boat, is a great consideration. The Bay of Islands is a lovely harbour, an ideal yachting-place, and is daily becoming a resort for tourists; and if there was railway connection with Auckland no doubt it would help Russell and the bay generally, and also be a great convenience to Whangarei residents. That, however, is of minor importance to the other matters.

3. *Mr. Coom.*] Would not the most direct route for the far north be by way of Kaikohe down the Mangakahia, without going round by Whangarei?—I should say that the most direct route ultimately will be the central route, but we do not want to wait for that, as it will be years and years in coming. It is of far more importance to get communication with Auckland, without waiting for the Main Trunk.

4. Do you think it advisable to make a connection with Whangarei for the use of the people in the far north, which will eventually be abandoned by them in favour of the more direct route?—Yes, because the connection between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap will always be wanted. I feel sure that even when the other connection is made the Whangarei Railway will pay handsomely.

5. Why?—Because of the timber and coal. There is an enormous extent of timber on the line yet.

6. Is not all the coal being carried on the line now from Hikurangi?—Yes, but there will be more.

7. Do you suppose that the coal now being carried from Hikurangi to Whangarei, and being shipped there for Auckland, will be carried over the rail to Auckland?—No, I do not think so.

8. The railway from Whangarei to McCarroll's Gap and on to Auckland would not benefit by the coal traffic at all?—Not to Auckland.

9. Why do you suppose the coal traffic would be diverted at Whangarei and brought elsewhere?—The mail-boats, by calling at Bay of Islands, would coal at Opuā Wharf, and land mails and passengers while they coaled.

10. You are only dealing with mail-boats, not the general consumption of coal?—Mail-boats, and possibly men-of-war.

11. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Do you know anything of the country between Rakatau and Parakao?—Yes.

12. Do you agree with a witness who said that it would be wise to construct the line as far as Parakao and go no further, because of the expense?—No, the main line should be pushed right through.

13. There are no difficulties between Parakao and Rakatau?—There are no engineering difficulties.

14. Do you agree with the last witness, who said that all passengers would go direct to Auckland by railway rather than by ocean?—I think that nine-tenths of them would.

15. If the direct route was made, passengers from the far north would not go by way of Kawakawa and Whangarei?—No; but that is a very long time to look forward to.

16. That would make a great difference to Whangarei and Kawakawa?—No; I do not think it would be a matter of very great importance.

17. Is there a large country to open up on the central route which it will pay the Dominion to develop?—Yes; it would pay handsomely. There is some splendid country there.

18. Do you think it wise to delay the development of that country whilst the twenty-seven miles between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap should be constructed?—I do not think there should be any delay. I should be very sorry to see the Main Trunk line delayed in order that the other work should go on.

19. You do not want the branch line to Whangarei to be made at the expense of the other line?—Not in any way.

20. If the two cannot be made, which would you prefer?—I should prefer the connection with Auckland first. It may be a selfish point of view, but it would be of the greatest assistance to the Bay of Islands County generally.

21. You would have that first, even at the expense of the other?—I should be inclined to, looking at it from a local point of view.

22. *Mr. Steadman.*] Would not the connection between Whangarei and the Main Trunk line give the people in the centre of the island a chance of using this coal instead of hauling it from Waikato?—Yes, certainly.

23. That coal would go that way instead of being hauled the other way?—Yes, and at a much cheaper cost to the people.

24. Do you know that a portion of this connecting-line between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap would also be used for the purpose of the Main Trunk line?—No; I do not know the country.

25. *The Chairman.*] If you were assured that it would take two years and a half to make the connection with Whangarei from the main line and five years to connect the main line with Kaikohe by the central route, which would you prefer to see pushed on?—The one between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap.

HARRY LONG examined. (No. 15.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, residing at Tanekaha, near Hikurangi. I wrote the Minister of Mines the following letter on the 26th January, 1911, with reference to coal-deposits on my land:—

"Tanekaha, 26th January, 1911.—The Hon. the Minister of Public Works.—In view of the pending inquiry concerning the route of the Main Trunk Railway north of Auckland, allow me to call your attention to the strong indications of valuable coal-deposits existing in the Wairua Valley, between Hikurangi and Tanekaha or Jordan. The matter seems to me of great importance as concerning the best route of the line to junction the Main Trunk to the present Grahamtown to Opuā line. Coal of a superior quality to any yet worked in the north has been found on both sides of the valley. In both cases the boring has been done near the hills, about three miles apart. The total area of the flat is over 20,000 acres, all being probably coal-bearing, and nearly all Crown lands, or held under L.I.P. Hoping this brief statement may be sufficient to show the need for further inquiry.—I have, &c., HARRY LONG, Tanekaha."

The Chairman: In connection with this letter the Mines Department have supplied the Commission with the following report:—

“Inspector of Mines’ Office, Thames, 23rd March, 1911.—The Under-Secretary, Mines Department, Wellington.—Coal-deposits, Wairua Valley: In accordance with instructions contained in your memo. (No. 520) of the 22nd ultimo (Mines, 1911/261), I am furnishing herewith a report on the indications of coal between Hikurangi and Tanekaha. Mr. Long’s farm and adjoining property are situated some three miles S.W. of the Hikurangi Township. About half-way between these lands and the township the Hikurangi Coal Company put down several boreholes, and it was said that a seam of good quality was located. However, strange to say, the company abandoned the property, which was subsequently taken up by the Northern Coal Company, who have bored to the N.W., and got coal. Mr. Long put down two boreholes in his land some years ago. One bore cut into a shale-seam at a depth of 40 ft., and was discontinued; the other was sunk to a depth of 100 ft. close by, but no slate or coal seam was discovered. The surrounding country is level and marshy, but there are no coal-outcrops to be seen. In view of the proximity of the land to the Hikurangi and Northern Collieries, and seeing that the strata dip west, coal should be found in the locality referred to by Mr. Long, and in the Wairua Valley as far as Hukerenui and Towai, where a coal-seam has been located. The land is easily approached by road, and four miles of railway would establish a connection with the Kawakawa-Grahamtown line.—B. BENNIE, Inspector of Mines.”

Witness: The coalfields extend to the railway, and in all probability through 30,000 or 40,000 acres of flat. I should like to say, in regard to the report from the Inspector of Mines, that the bore cut into the shale-seam was cut to a depth of 100 ft. before being discontinued, and not 40 ft., as stated in the report. I found coal at 40 ft. two years ago, but before that I had picked up a piece of coal on the surface.

2. *The Chairman.*] Are you an advocate of the extension of the line from Whangarei to McCarrroll’s Gap in order to enable you to send your coal to the south of Whangarei?—No. My idea is that the coal country tending in the direction of Mangakahia should be a claim for consideration for making a junction with Hikurangi and bringing the line through there.

3. To connect with the proposed central line?—Yes, on the western route.

4. You propose having a branch railway a distance of some eighteen miles to enable you to connect with the main line?—I am proposing to have a railway across to Mangakahia, and it would be worth while to make this branch line.

5. Would the coal go by way of Whangarei?—If the railway was made it would go over all the lines north.

6. You would still make Russell and Whangarei your shipping ports?—Yes.

7. What is the fuel that is used now?—The population consists mostly of farmers, but, of course, we are looking forward to something other than firewood for fuel.

8. *Mr. Coom.*] Why should you extend the line eighteen miles when a distance of four miles would tap your coalfield?—Because they wanted a junction between the two; that is what I gathered from the Whangarei paper.

9. You think there would be an advantage in connecting Hikurangi with the Main Trunk?—Yes, it would open up a splendid lot of country. I recommend the connection for the sake of working the coalfields, the opening-up of good agricultural country, and joining the two railways together.

10. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] How far is Hikurangi from Whangarei?—About eleven or twelve miles.

11. *Mr. Becroft.*] Is it your opinion that the connection you suggest would produce more traffic with Whangarei?—It would connect the railways, and there would be more traffic right through.

12. Is it your opinion that it would be an advantage to Whangarei to have the connection you have suggested?—I do. It would tend to connect the country districts with Whangarei more than is the case at the present time. At present we have a distance of from five to twenty miles to ride to catch the train.

13. *The Chairman.*] How many years have you been residing near Hikurangi?—Fifteen years.

14. What is the name of the place you are advocating that the branch line from the Main Trunk should come from?—I do not know really where the line is to come. I understand, however, that the railway is to come through Mangakahia, and if so I propose that the railway should junction from Mangakahia to Hikurangi.

15. How far are you from the Titoki Bridge?—By road, about twenty-two miles. The route I am advocating up the river-flats would be seventeen or eighteen miles between Hikurangi and Titoki.

16. Which road do the settlers take in going to Whangarei from Aponga and Otakairangi?—Through Ruatangata and Kamo.

17. Is there anything you wish to add?—I believe that the route proposed by me—viz., from McCarrroll’s Gap to Mangakahiha and from thence to Hikurangi—will be the best, and the best-paying route, for the following reasons: First, it will do all that is claimed for the eastern and the western routes, in that (a) it will form a short and convenient connection with the present railway, and so give ready access by rail between Auckland and the northern districts; (b) it will follow the direct route to the north to Mangakahia, and open up good country in the inland district. Second, the eighteen miles of railway from Mangakahia to Hikurangi, will follow the river-flats to the junction of the Hikurangi River, thence to the junction of the Mangawahine River, thence to the Aponga Settlement, and through the Otakairangi and the Wairoa River flats to Hikurangi. *En route* it will tap the following settlements, the most distant being within two miles of the railway—Purua, Aponga, Ruatangata, Otakairangi, Riponui, and Tanekaha. Third, it will pass through immense coal areas in the Wairua and Otakairangi flats—approximately, 20,000 acres—and it will open up for selection hundreds of acres of good land.

RAWENE, MONDAY, 17TH APRIL, 1911.

GEORGE THOMAS CLENDON examined. (No. 16.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am Chairman of the Hokianga County Council. With regard to the railway extension from Kawakawa to Hokianga, it is a matter of very great importance to this district, and we would urge that you favourably recommend the pushing-on of this line with as little delay as possible. The connection with Kawakawa will to a certain extent overcome the isolation that has hitherto marked this district. We should like to have the line, after reaching Kaikohe, extended to some point on the Hokianga River where there is deep water. What we require most is the Main Trunk, and a connection with some good markets. We have some of the best land in the Dominion up here in the north. The climate is good, but the products at present are lost on account of there being no connection with a suitable market, especially for perishable goods. I would urge that the Main Trunk line be pushed forward as fast as possible, and by the shortest route that can be obtained. We know that the longer the line is the higher the charge for transport, and therefore we desire to have the route made as direct as it can be. We have in this county a very large area of Native lands which have so far been locked up, but facilities are now being afforded which make the position in that respect a little more favourable. The opening-up of these lands, however, will not be of very great consequence until we have a connection with a suitable market. This district is well adapted for fruit-growing, the pastoral industry, and a portion of it for agricultural purposes.

2. What are your views regarding the linking-up of the Whangarei—Opua and the Dargaville—Kaihu existing sections of railway with the Main Trunk?—I am hardly conversant with the country, but I would suggest that when the connection is made between Kawakawa and Kaikohe it should be extended on to Hokianga, and then the line might be worked from both ends back to Mangakahia.

3. You think that the junction of the Main Trunk line with the Whangarei—Kawakawa line would be sufficient?—Yes, for a while.

4. *Mr. Becroft.*] What are the freight-charges from here to Auckland?—£1 1s. per ton, with a minimum charge of 2s. The passenger tariff is £1 6s. single and £2 2s. return, saloon.

5. *Mr. Coom.*] Can you give us any idea of the quantity of good land available north of a line from Kawakawa to the west coast?—I could not give the amount, but there is a very large area. One-third of the Hokianga County is very good land.

6. *Mr. Ronayne.*] You are not in favour of a connection being made between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei?—I am not. I should prefer the direct route from McCarroll's Gap to Kaikohe.

7. In the event of a connection being made between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei, and the line being extended from Kaikohe to Hokianga, would you not then be enabled to send your cattle to Auckland with perfect safety?—Certainly we would, and it would facilitate matters to a great extent, but we are looking at the extra cost it would entail.

8. Is there anything to send over the railway other than stock?—Agricultural products, butter, and fruit. I may state that twenty years ago there was a good deal more fruit to be obtained at Hokianga than now, for the reason that many settlers abandoned their orchards because they were unable to get to suitable markets.

9. Is there any possibility of the dairying industry being increased?—Yes; it is increasing very fast now.

10. Would the butter go by rail or steamer?—I should say it would go by rail, as that would give quicker despatch. That is one reason why I said the railway should come to some point on the river where there is deep water.

11. Which way would the merchandise come?—By the cheapest route, of course, but I should think the bulk would come by rail; certainly the goods carried by measurement would.

12. Which way would the timber go?—That would depend a good deal on the rate of freights. At the present time the bulk of the timber is going across to Australia, where there is a better market, and it is being carried at as reasonable a rate of freight as can be got to any of the markets in the Dominion.

13. What are the steerage rates between Auckland and Hokianga?—£1 15s. return, and, I think, £1 2s. 6d. single.

14. *Mr. Evans.*] Do you not think goods would be brought in and taken from here cheaper by water than by railway?—They may be, but there is the drawback of two bar harbours, and the consequent detention thereby, which has been so much against the settlement of this district for the last twenty or thirty years. Three shipments of fat cattle went away from here last year, and one proved so disastrous, owing to the detention of the vessel, that no further shipments were attempted.

15. If you had railway-communication to-morrow, and water-carriage was cheaper than railway, would you not still send by water?—There would be a certain amount go by water, no doubt; but I think the greater portion would be carried by rail.

16. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Are the freight-rates you have quoted to Auckland or Onehunga?—The freight-rate is to Auckland, the passenger-rate to Onehunga.

17. Is there any reason why the settlement on the west of this district should not be as great as that on the eastern side, provided equal facilities are given?—There is no reason why it should not.

18. Do you think, then, that in the future the population and industries on the western side will be as great as on the east?—Yes.

19. Do goods come in here for distribution inland?—No, they are mostly sent from the other side. For Okaihau a few of the goods come to this port.

20. In spite of the water facilities the freight still goes across country?—Yes.
21. Are the roads better over there than here?—Yes.
22. It is a matter of roads?—Yes.
23. What do you think would be the effect of the direct route?—It would open up the country.
24. Where would you get the timber from for these new settlers?—There is plenty of timber along the line, especially in the Mangakahia district.
25. You think sawmills would spring up there then?—I think so, unless it is cut down before the line is opened.
26. Do you not think that some of the Bay of Islands traffic would go to the nearest ports?—Yes, but that away from the river would go by railway.
27. Is there not a great deal of this land held by Maoris?—Yes: in this county about one-third of the whole area.
28. What is the quality of the Native land?—Very good.
29. What is the extent of the European holdings?—A year or two ago I went very closely into the matter, and found that in this county about one-third of the land was held by the Crown, one-third by the Natives, and one-third privately, mostly in small holdings.
30. What land will a line from Kaikohe to Hokianga go through?—Mostly Native.
31. Do you think the Government should acquire that land before putting the railway through?—Yes, I do. I think the Government should acquire all the surplus Native lands.
32. And the European land too, if any?—Yes.
33. *Mr. Steadman.*] How far have you been over this line?—I came from Auckland to Kaikohe along the proposed western route.
34. Do you know the district to the east intimately?—No.
35. If freezing-works were established at the Bay of Islands, do you think cattle from here would be sent to Auckland?—That depends on the market.
36. As a commercial man, do you think there would be that difference in the price at the freezing-works at Bay of Islands and Auckland to warrant sending stock to Auckland by train?—No, I should not think so.
37. Or if the freezing-works were at Whangarei?—No; I think that if freezing-works were established at any particular point they ought to give as good a price for the stock as could be obtained in Auckland.
38. Do you know the country to the east and west of the road you came through from Auckland to Kaikohe?—No.
39. You do not know whether it is good, bad, or indifferent?—No. The country I came through was good.
40. Is there any extent of timber land in the Mangakahia Valley?—Most of the kauri has been cut, but there is a fair quantity of pine and totara.
41. Would not your butter go to the Bay of Islands if there was sufficient to warrant the steamer calling?—Yes.
42. *The Chairman.*] What is the export of cattle from this district?—Between one thousand and two thousand head were shipped last year by steamer to Onehunga, but owing to the knocking about the fat stock received it was found to be not very profitable. I presume it would be the same if the stock had to be transhipped from rail to steamer at Whangarei.
43. Were these cattle freezers or stores?—Mostly stores.

ERNEST McLEOD examined. (No. 17.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am Clerk and Treasurer of the Hokianga County Council, and until recently was also Engineer for the county. I have lived in the north for thirty-seven or thirty-eight years. I may say I am thoroughly conversant with all the counties north of Auckland. Twenty-seven years ago I rode to Auckland by way of Whangarei, and I was struck with the poorness of the east coast generally. I think it would be better to confine my remarks to the country between McCarroll's Gap to Pakotai. Pakotai is the southern extremity of the Hokianga County. It is also about the centre of the island. Residents generally, when this discussion of the eastern and western line took place, said it was immaterial to them until it got into the Hokianga County at Pakotai, and from there they want the line to go direct north. If we take a line from Pakotai to Ruakokopu, and a radius of ten miles on each side which would be immediately benefited, there is an area of 120,000 acres, and as near as I can make out 30,000 acres of Native land. From Ruakokopu to Kaikohe there are 90,000 acres in a radius of ten miles, which is the richest land in the North Island. About 70,000 acres of that is Native land. There is a tremendous amount of milling-timber on it. I should have mentioned that from the Waoku Plateau you will see that the natural inclination of the land is to the east. From Kaikohe, going west, a very easy line could be made to Taheke. The distance is about ten miles, and there are no engineering difficulties. There is deep water there three hours before and three hours after high tide. Between Kaikohe and Horeke, the most direct route north, there are 70,000 acres. Horeke has the poorest description of land, and that grows *Paspalum* as well as the richest land. Between the Waihou River to Mangamuka there are 80,000 acres. There is also a large area of Crown land which once held kauri, and is still called a forest reserve, but is all available for settlement. From Mangamuka to Maungataniwha you might safely say that there are 100,000 acres that would be tapped. Broadwood, which lies immediately to the north of here, would be connected with Mangamuka by a road which is going through the Karae Block. That is a sketch going through the Hokianga County in the most direct line, which would affect Mangonui, and be most beneficial to us. For many years the Main Trunk line has been talked of as going through the centre of the island, and the engineers in the past realized

some of the possibilities that Hokianga has. Hokianga is famous for its fish, having had one haul of no less than five thousand. Our peaches, which are being canned at Hokianga, not only took first prize at the Christchurch Exhibition, but also in London and Paris. No one knows the exact number of cattle taken away from here. Some thousands have gone. The buyers are continuously about the place. A dairy factory was established at Hokianga, and it was scoffed at as being premature; but although only the poorest land has been treated by the dairy, the results have been highly satisfactory. When we see these things, and know of the other good land roundabout, which is unoccupied, it is safe to say that the possibilities of Hokianga are great indeed. The question was asked about the second-class fare to Onehunga, but as a matter of fact the "Claymore" has no second class. We do not want to rob any place of a railway, but we do say that if there are to be any more branch lines taken in hand it will only hinder the construction of this Main Trunk line. In time, no doubt, there will be a branch to Whangarei, but to do it now would be a mistake, for the Main Trunk line has far greater claims for a large expenditure than any branch line would have.

2. *Mr. Becroft.*] In what state is this 400,000 acres on the main line that you have referred to?—Unsettled most of it.

3. Approximately, how much of this land is taken up?—200,000 acres.

4. Would you advise that the Government should resume it before the railway was put through?—It would be beneficial to the country.

5. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Have you any idea of the amount of timber that would go by the railway if constructed by the western route?—They have been taking kauri from the Mangakahia since my boyhood days. 30,000,000 or 40,000,000 ft. ought to cover it to the north, but further north from here there are 100,000,000 ft. of milling-timber—kahikatea and rimu.

6. Would that be taken down by water?—The kauri would, but not the rimu and kahikatea, because if they are any length of time in the water they deteriorate.

7. How was the kauri taken out?—It was driven on the river.

8. *Mr. Evans.*] Do you think the railway could compete with water-carriage between here and Auckland?—Yes; by water there are so many transshipments.

9. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] The settlement along the line would be a very large one, which would not be interfered with by sea-carriage?—That is so.

10. Do you know the country from Kaikohe to Parakao?—Yes. It is the easiest and most natural route, and it is the centre of the island.

11. *Mr. Steadman.*] How often have you been down the eastern route to Whangarei?—A good many times. I was there five years ago, fifteen years ago, and twenty-seven years ago, and a good many times in between.

12. Perhaps ten trips?—It may be twenty.

13. You rode the Main North Road without going off it?—That is so.

14. If freezing-works are established at Whangarei or Bay of Islands, as soon as the line is opened to Kaikohe all the cattle trade will drift that way?—Yes, and that is my object in pointing out the folly of not constructing the central line *via* Pakotai.

15. You think the trade would go to Opuā otherwise?—Yes.

16. Would it not go to Auckland?—It would go to Auckland, but if there are freezing-works at Opuā it would naturally go there.

17. Do you know how far McCarroll's Gap is from Whangarei?—About thirty miles.

18. How many miles are to be constructed to connect that with Auckland by way of Whangarei to Kaikohe?—Twenty-seven or twenty-eight miles: Pakotai to Kaikohe twenty-seven or twenty-eight miles.

19. Would it not give you immediate connection with Auckland if that twenty-seven or twenty-eight miles were made?—Yes, it would.

20. Much sooner than the other way?—No.

21. Why?—The Government is not likely to push a branch line ahead with the same speed as a main line. Another thing, it is robbing the people in the centre of the island who have taken up land on the strength of the main line going through.

KOHUKOHU, WEDNESDAY, 19TH APRIL, 1911.

GEORGE GARDINER MENZIES examined. (No. 18.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am Engineer for the Hokianga County Council, and I was formerly Government engineer under the Roads Department in charge of this district. I reside at Rawene.

2. Would you kindly give your opinion regarding the railway routes in the north of Auckland?—I do not know anything about the exact locality of McCarroll's Gap, but through the Mangakahia Valley for about twenty-two miles I know the country fairly well, but there is a gap from there to Avoca I do not know. From the boundary of the Hokianga County northward I know the country fairly well. The land along the whole of that route is, I suppose, some of the best in the Dominion. I could not say how far it extends on the other side of the line, but from there to Marlborough, on the west, it is of excellent quality. I think the line to Kaikohe should be made through the Mangakahia Valley, and if that was done the whole of the district of Mangakahia would be served, whilst it would also serve as the best connection with Dargaville and the main line.

3. You are not considering the question of whether the line should go to the east or the west of the Tangihuas?—No.

4. *Mr. Coom.*] Have you any knowledge of suitable country being found for a connection between the Kaihu Railway and the main line?—No, I do not know that part of the country at all.

5. *Mr. Evans.*] Is the trouble here that you have no money available for roads?—There are a thousand square miles in this county, and the European population is under three thousand. The rating is on the unimproved value. The Maoris have one-third of the land, the Government have about one-third, and private owners have about one-third.

6. What is the rate?—I think, 3d. in the pound.

7. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What is the Native population?—Between two thousand and two thousand five hundred.

8. Are there any engineering difficulties in the construction of a railway through the Mangakahia Valley?—No. About three miles from Kaikohe the country rises pretty suddenly.

ALFRED COOKE YARBOROUGH examined. (No. 19.)

1. *The Chairman.*] How long have you resided in Hokianga?—About thirty-nine years.

2. What is your occupation?—I am a timber and gum merchant.

3. Would you give your views upon the question of railway-extension in the north?—I really do not know the district at the other end of the Mangakahia, but I know a little of the district between here and Kaipara. I have not been down the centre of the Island from Kaikohe.

4. Which would suit this part of the country—the central line, through the Mangakahia to pick up the railway by the shortest route, or to have a branch to connect with the Whangarei-Kawakawa line, and so give a route by way of Kawakawa?—I think there is no doubt whatever that the country would be best suited with the central route, but we look upon it that the Whangarei connection is of the utmost importance to this part of the country, because it would be nearer completion five years hence than the other would be likely to be.

5. Do you know the difference in distance between the southern connection and the most direct central route?—I do not, but I should think that the route by Whangarei would be very much longer.

6. You have land to the north of here, in the Broadwood district?—Yes.

7. You have worked the land?—Yes.

8. What class of land have you found it to be?—Excellent land.

9. Is the land fairly good through there?—Yes. There is a strip of a mile and a half through the country that is not good, but all the rest is very good indeed. It will feed two sheep and a half to the acre.

10. *Mr. Evans.*] Will it carry a beast to the acre?—It will fatten a beast to 3½ acres, on surface-sown grass, that is, fit for the Auckland market.

11. *The Chairman.*] What is your market at the present time for fat stock?—Generally speaking, at present it is Whangarei or the east coast. We have shipped cattle to Auckland, but it was not satisfactory. The southern part of the district sends a good deal of stock over to Kaipara.

12. Do you know what happens to the stock after getting to Whangarei or Kaipara?—They are sent by scow on to Auckland.

13. Ultimately the market is Auckland?—Yes.

14. Have you a regular market for fat stock?—There is always a keen demand for it.

15. Have you any idea of the number of stock that go out of the district in the year?—Last year, some two thousand head went out.

16. What state would the fat cattle be in when they got to Whangarei?—They would go off a little, but it is only five days' driving. The trouble is that from the time you move them off the run it would take over a week, and for that reason we look to the railway as being the principal means of carrying stock.

17. Have you any other remarks?—I think this is one of the finest districts in New Zealand. We consider that it is far in advance of what the Waikato was immediately before the railway was put in. I include in that statement the Bay of Islands, Hokianga, and Mangonui.

18. *Mr. Evans.*] Which do you think you most want, railways or roads?—Railways, undoubtedly. We cannot get population without the railway. They talk about the far north, and will not come up to see whether it is good or not.

19. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Are you aware that the central route is thirty miles shorter than the proposed route from Whangarei to McCarroll's Gap?—I have no doubt that the central route would be the shorter.

20. You would prefer to see the piece of line between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap constructed immediately in preference to having the central route made?—If we had the choice between the two routes, central or Whangarei, we should prefer the Whangarei connection, because we would get it earlier.

21. *Mr. Coom.*] What were the freight charges between here and Onehunga?—12s. 6d. per head freight, and 3s. 6d. wharfage.

22. Supposing it was a question of one connection by railway with this district, by Whangarei or the main line, which would you prefer?—The central route would be the best for the north generally, but for this particular part I think the Whangarei connection would suit us best. The stock is the main thing we have to consider.

KAIKOHE, WEDNESDAY, 11TH APRIL, 1911.

GEORGE FREDERICK DICKESON examined (No. 20.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a gum-buyer and storekeeper, residing at Kaikohe, where I have been a resident for thirty years.

2. During that period has your business taken you much about the vicinity of Kaikohe?—Yes.

3. And you are conversant with the land that lies about Mangakahia and the Hokianga County?—Yes, and the Bay of Islands County also.

4. Will you give the Commission your opinion regarding the routes or route to be taken in the further prosecution of railways in the north?—I think the main line should come through the Mangakahia Valley to Kaikohe. The land through the Mangakahia Valley is of first-class quality, and it is being settled by good settlers at the present time, and that railway will give them an opportunity of sending their produce and stock to Auckland; also produce from Kaikohe and farther north, including Hokianga and Mangonui. It would be very much quicker to send stock to Auckland by railway than to send it to Whangarei and be shipped there to Auckland.

5. Is there much stock going out of this district?—A very great number indeed. This last year the number ran into thousands of head.

6. When those cattle are collected in the north, where do they ultimately go to?—To Whangarei, and there shipped to Auckland, or driven to the nearest point on the railway. They cannot be consumed in Whangarei, and must go to Auckland or Waikato.

7. I suppose you do not know whether they go to the rail-head at Te Hana?—No.

8. Have you any comments to make regarding the proposals to link up the main line with the Whangarei-Kawakawa and the Dargaville-Kaihu Sections?—It would be all right to have the branch lines, but we must have the Main Trunk. Cattle require very quick transit, and it makes a great difference to have to go round by Whangarei. It makes a difference of days and a reduction in value, especially in the case of fat stock. The same thing applies to other produce, such as butter, &c. Quick transit is the main thing. The only other comment I have to make is the benefit that would be derived by the completion of the main line by the northern people. There is beautiful land in Hokianga, Kaipara, and in the north, and the people there should be considered.

9. When the Main Trunk is put through, say, to Hokianga, what parts do you think would the majority of the products come from between Hokianga and Auckland?—Waima, Waihou, Mangamuka, Broadwood, and Herekino. The land round about these places is very good.

10. *Mr. Evans.*] You are not in favour of a connection between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap?—It would be a so-much longer distance we would have to go. It would not be opening up the Mangakahia Valley.

11. Do you not think it would be better to have those two lines linked up—that by so doing you would get communication with Auckland by railway quicker than by waiting for the completion of the Main Trunk?—I hardly think it would be much quicker, as there is a possibility of not less than £100,000 being voted per year for the construction of the main line, whereas if only a branch line was to be gone on with the vote would be a small one.

12. *Mr. Ronayne.*] The distance round by Kawakawa and Grahamtown and McCarroll's Gap would be only twenty-seven miles longer than the short route by the central line, so it would only take about two hours longer to convey cattle to Auckland by train: would that be a material difference?—What with shunting and coaling, &c., it would be a good deal longer than two hours.

13. Assuming that the Whangarei to McCarroll's Gap section could be constructed in two years, I suppose you would not be agreeable to wait for five years for the construction of the line from McCarroll's Gap to Kaikohe by the central route. In other words, if the line was constructed between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei, you would be able to send your cattle from Kaikohe to Auckland by rail in two years instead of having to wait five years?—[No answer.]

14. I presume when the line is through the cattle will all be shipped by rail, and not through the Hokianga Harbour?—I should think they would all go by rail. The harbour is dangerous, and outgoing boats often get stuck up for a week.

15. Would you get your stores through the Hokianga Harbour?—I do not think so. There is no doubt that Opua is the best port. It is a splendid harbour.

16. Can you tell us how many thousands of cattle were sent from the north to Auckland in, say, twelve months?—I know the amount is over two thousand head from the north. Quite a thousand went from this district, and about a thousand from Hokianga.

17. That would make about four thousand in the twelve months?—Yes.

18. Do you consider that trade would be materially increased when through railway communication is established?—Undoubtedly. Settlement would advance very rapidly.

19. *Mr. Steadman.*] Do you know how many thousands of people there are up Pihama?—No.

20. What road would you use yourself going to Auckland as a passenger if the railways were closed up?—The Main Trunk, decidedly.

21. Do you know the difference in time going by way of Whangarei and steamer or by way of the Main Trunk?—I should say that one would get to Auckland in six hours from Kaikohe by the Main Trunk.

22. How many miles is it to Auckland?—160, I think.

23. Do you know what the difference in passage-money would be?—The train-fare, I suppose, would be 1d. per mile second class; that would be 13s. 4d. to Auckland by the direct route. From here to Whangarei is fifty-six miles, and the return from Whangarei to Auckland is 15s., first class, by steamer. It is not a mere matter of fares, it is a matter of time. It takes six hours to Whangarei and eight hours from Whangarei to Auckland.

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 rail 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.

KAIKOHE, WEDNESDAY, 19TH APRIL, 1911.

ALFRED WILLIAM EDWARDS examined. (No. 21.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a storekeeper and gum-buyer, residing at Kaikohe, where I have lived for the last twenty-three or twenty-four years. I am a County Councillor, representing this riding in the Bay of Islands County.
2. Will you make a statement to the Commission?—I should say that the central route would be much preferable.
3. As far as the country here is concerned, is it of any importance to you whether the railway goes to the east or the west of the Tangihuas?—It is not material to us at all.
4. Would you give a few of your reasons why you advocate the central route?—I consider that it opens up the country better. If a branch line were made to Whangarei all the Mangakahia country would be left empty. It is also much shorter to Auckland by the central line, and Auckland is our market.
5. You know the Bay of Islands County, Hokianga, and the Mangakahia Valley very well: where is the market for all that country?—Auckland. We send stock, wool, flax, and butter. Mangakahia will be a good butter-producing district in the near future.
6. Would the train running through the district assist in the transit of cream?—Undoubtedly.
7. What is your opinion regarding the putting-in of connecting branches between the Main Trunk line and the Whangarei-Kawakawa line on the one side and Dargaville and Kaikohe on the other?—These connections should come after the Main Trunk. The main arterial railway should be the first consideration.
8. What is the export of butter at the present time from this district?—There is only one factory in this locality at the present time. It produces about 4 tons per week, but it will be near 40 tons a week in the near future.
9. Supposing you had the railway to-morrow, what would be its prospects?—Butter, stock, gum, timber, wool, and flax.
10. A lot of that will go by water?—It will be taken to the port anyway.
11. Are the Maoris willing to sell their land?—Yes; they are negotiating for the sale of a large part of the land now.
12. Is there any Government land here?—Yes, about eight or nine miles to the south. It is very good stock-carrying country.
13. What is the extent of good land around Kaikohe, say, within eight miles?—About fifteen miles by twelve miles to as far as the Awaroa River.
14. *Mr. Ronayne.*] You attach great importance to the butter industry?—Yes.
15. Have you any idea of the cost of sending a ton of butter 160 miles by rail to Auckland?—I do not know what the particular tariff for butter is.
16. Have you no idea what the amount would be?—No.
17. Would you be surprised to learn it would be 12s. 2d. per ton?—That is cheap.
18. You will agree that it will take a great many thousands of tons of butter per annum to make the railway pay?—Yes.
19. Do you produce any cheese?—No.
20. *Mr. Coom.*] Do you consider that the present exports of this district would maintain a railway?—No.
21. Do you consider if a railway was made here the population would increase and the exports also increase?—Very rapidly.
22. *Mr. Steadman.*] What port do you reckon would serve you best?—Butter would be shipped direct by rail.
23. Do you know that in the southern part of the Island they send butter by steamer to Wellington rather than by rail?—No.
24. Do you not think that when there is a large amount of produce grown in this district steamers will call at Opua?—If there is any inducement for them to do so, of course they will. That is natural.
25. Shipping and port charges are put against the goods, are they not?—Yes.
26. If there was a railway direct to Auckland butter would be taken in fourteen hours to the freezer?—That is so.
27. If there was shipping to the port it would go direct to the refrigerator?—Yes, and they could do the same with the train.
28. If a connection was made to Whangarei, you think the Main Trunk would not be gone on with?—It is only an assumption, of course, but that is my feeling.
29. How long is the kauri-gum industry likely to continue?—I cannot possibly state.
30. What is the export from these northern counties?—From the Bay, I suppose, there is not more than 10 tons a week at the present time. The gum-market is very bad. A good deal of gum comes from Whangaroa and Hokianga, and goes out by water.
31. Will this gum go by rail if the line comes to Kaikohe?—It will go by whichever route is the cheapest.
32. What is the gum freight?—15s. per ton.
33. And there would be 20 or 30 tons per week, I suppose?—Yes.
34. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Have you been in other parts of the Dominion?—Yes.
35. Has the construction of railways, as a rule, been delayed until after the country was peopled?—No; the country is generally not peopled for the first few years of a railway's existence.
36. What purpose are railways built for?—To open up the country and encourage industry.

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

country in comparison with what will be served by the western route. There is a range dividing the two routes, and it is impossible to get a connection there. The portion west of the Tangihua Range could not be served by the eastern route.

6. Is that land on the western route agricultural or pastoral land?—Both. There are rich flats and undulating country, some of which is carrying good grass.

7. What would be the extra distance to connect the eastern route at Kirikopuni?—Four miles and three-quarters in a direct line.

8. You say that from Dargaville to Omano is eleven miles. If that line was put in there would be no actual connection with Dargaville, would there?—Not unless the river was bridged.

9. It would be expensive to bridge the river at Dargaville?—Yes; it would have to be a swing bridge.

10. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Would the railway-bridge go anywhere near the present Mangakahia Road bridge?—No; considerably to the south.

11. Is there much difference in the width of the river at the two places?—They have been chained by engineers, but I have not measured them.

12. The railway-bridge would be crossing the Mangakahia at a wider part of the Mangakahia Stream than that at which the road bridge crosses?—I believe that is so, but I have not measured it.

13. Can you compare the cost or length of the Tangiteroria Road bridge with the existing bridge over the Mangakahia River?—I think the Mangakahia Bridge is about the same length and cost as the bridge at Tangiteroria.

14. As one understanding the country, and who drew the plans of the Tangiteroria Bridge, you think two railway-bridges would cost more than one?—It was an estimate from my knowledge of the district. The flooding in this district is a thing that has to be learned. The Tangiteroria Bridge had to be kept to its present level, so as to be above water. The Mangakahia River bridge is higher than ours, and has been under water since it was constructed, which shows that the Mangakahia floods far more heavily than the Wairoa. The proposed railway-bridge across the Wairoa is lower down than the Tangiteroria traffic-bridge, and hence less subject to floods.

15. Can you name some properties on the western route which you mention as being large holdings?—There is part of the Karaka Block, in one piece containing 2,000 acres.

16. Is that the largest?—I cannot say definitely. There is also the Maungaru Estate.

17. Have you any idea of the number of settlers on that?—I think there are less than a dozen. It originally comprised 21,000 acres.

18. Is it good land for settlement?—Yes.

19. On the other side of the river are there any large properties?—There is the Omano Estate, about 12,000 acres, held by one man, and the railway will pass right through it.

20. Have you any idea of the approximate value of that land?—Not less than £5 per acre.

21. The future population on the western route, you say, will be a large one. What will be the industries?—Dairying and grazing.

22. Are these owners willing to divide their estates?—I think Mr. A. E. Harding is. He has already parted with more than half of his estate.

23. What is the reason for the western district being undeveloped?—Want of roads and want of subdivision of large properties.

24. Why has the east been roaded and the west not roaded?—I do not know, unless it has been more favoured by the Government.

25. It has not been more favoured by nature?—No, I do not think so—not so far as the quality of the country is concerned.

26. Have you been through the western route?—Only from Omano to the Upper Mangonui Bridge, about eight miles.

27. What is the distance from there on the eastern route to tap the western route?—Ten miles, probably.

28. The country between Omano and the Upper Mangonui you regard as excellent country?—Yes; also from Wairoa River back to Mangakahia.

29. Is there a road between these two points you speak of?—No, but there is a road some little distance away from it—from the river northwards.

30. With reference to the Kaihu Valley Railway: would the connection between Taita and Mangakahia open up country?—Yes. There are 6,000 or 7,000 acres of Crown lands, known as the Awakino Block.

31. Is there a large holding outside of Crown lands?—No.

32. Will you give us some idea of the size of the holdings, and what the people are doing?—There are a few settlers in the Taita Settlement. The settlers are milking cows for the creamery, and send their milk by the Kaihu train. The Karaka settlers feed sheep principally.

33. You have heard about the timber forest existing beyond the present Kaihu Railway terminus: would either of the links tap that timber?—No.

34. *Mr. Steadman.*] The Parish of Mareretu has been sold, has it not, and cut up into small holdings?—Yes.

35. And the Parish of Tauraroa?—It was cut into small sections, but it is not held so now.

36. What is the largest holding?—I cannot give the figures.

37. Are there more than 1,000 acres held there in one holding?—I am certain there is.

38. They have been paying rates for a long time to assist in maintaining the roads?—I presume so, but, being in another county, I cannot say so.

39. The land about Omano has not been paying rates?—Yes, certainly.

40. How long has the land about Maungakaramea been settled?—Since the Maori war, I believe.

41. Do you know the land from Maungatapere to Poroti along the Mangakahia?—Some is good and some is poor.
42. Is all that settled?—The good has been settled for a long time, but the poor parts want settlement yet.
43. Have you been over the Ruatangata Parish between the eastern route and the Whangarei-Kawakawa line?—I have only ridden through it by the main north road from Whangarei.
44. The land on Maungaru is owned privately, but not fully developed?—That is so.
45. Are there settlers on the other route all the way?—It is taken up much the same as the other is, but in rather smaller holdings.
46. Is there any Crown land on the eastern route which could be taken up between Mangakahia and the Tangihua River?—It has already been settled.
47. Is there any open for settlement which has not been taken up?—Not that I know of.
48. It is eight miles from Omano to Mangonui Bridge?—Yes.
49. Does that road go through one estate?—Not for the whole distance.
50. What other estates are served by it?—A few small settlers.
51. What land lies to the west of that piece of land?—The Girls' High School endowment, which is taken up under leasehold, and occupied by a lot of small settlers.
52. What is the next block?—Mangarata, held under freehold by four settlers. The area is 5,000 acres. The next block is Te Kohuroa, 6,000 acres, held by one owner, Mr. Bailey.
53. Coming farther south the land is divided?—Yes, it is held in small holdings.
54. *The Chairman.*] The route that is common to both sides runs as far north as McCarroll's Gap, and from there divides and meets again at Mangakahia Bridge: which of these routes is the shorter?—The western.
55. In connecting the western route with a point opposite Dargaville, have you any idea of the cost of a bridge to cross the river?—No: I have not gone into that question.
56. Would it be a large sum?—It would be a considerable sum.
57. Would not the other connection you speak of from Kirikopuni to Dargaville be a more reasonable route by which to connect the western system with the Main Trunk?—That is, I consider, the more reasonable, cheaper, and valuable route.
58. Of the three routes you have mentioned, that is the route you would yourself advocate?—Yes.
59. If the line goes to the east of the Tangihuas, what do you think is the best connection between the eastern system and the Dargaville-Kaihu Railway?—From opposite Dargaville to Paparoa *via* Raupo, a distance of 27½ miles, in a straight line.
60. You would be confronted with this big bridge across the Wairoa?—Yes: either that or a ferry, which latter I think would be the cheapest.
61. Are there any estates on the western route which could be acquired by the Crown?—I consider Omano Estate should be acquired. It comprises 12,000 acres, and is owned by Mr. Riddell.
62. Which lands would carry a closer settlement—along the west of the Tangihua Range or on the east of the Tangahua Range?—I think, on the western route.

HENRY JAMES SLADE examined. (No. 23.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am Chairman of the Hobson County, and reside on the opposite side of the river to Dargaville. I am a farmer. I may say that I had intended giving evidence showing the centrality and the shortness of the western route as against the eastern route, and I had also intended to give evidence showing the class of country to the east and west of the Tangihuas; but Mr. Hammond has already traversed that ground very ably, and, as you have suggested that we should not duplicate evidence, I will not touch on those matters.

2. Do you corroborate what Mr. Hammond said?—Yes. I feel that a strong argument in favour of the western route as against the eastern route is the cheap freights that exist on the east coast as against the high freights that exist on the west coast. Mr. Hammond has shown that the eastern route passes within six miles of Mangapai, on the east coast, and the freight to Mangapai by scow, I understand, is 5s. a ton, while the steamer freight to that port is 7s. 6d. per ton from Auckland direct. The freight from Auckland to Tokatoka, on the Wairoa River, is about £1 10s. a ton. The freight to Kirikopuni or Tangiteroria, where the proposed western route will cross the Wairoa River, is £1 15s. a ton. The freight from Auckland to Whangarei is 7s. 6d. a ton. I have heard it said that it will be detrimental for the railway to touch deep water on the Wairoa at Tangiteroria, but I am satisfied that if the railway is permitted to reach that point, that prophecy will be found to be altogether contrary to fact. The position of the settlers at the present time is that if they wish to send stock to Auckland from there they have to send it by steamer or scow, by punts. Those punts have to be towed down the river across the dangerous Kaipara Heads, and then the stock or cargo has to be transhipped at Helensville and sent on to Auckland. I say it is only reasonable that when the railway touches deep water at this point, and the settlers have direct railway communication with Auckland, the whole of their produce and stock will go by the direct route, instead of having to be transhipped to the railway at Helensville. I feel satisfied that if the Main Trunk line is allowed to touch deep water on the east coast—say, at Mangapai or Whangarei—any freights from the far north coming down the line will be transhipped at Whangarei to Auckland by water, as I am satisfied that the railway could not compete with cheap freights that exist on the east coast. On the other hand, the effect of the railway touching deep water on the Wairoa River would be that the river would act as a feeder of the railway for all time. Another point that I wish to bring forward is

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.

30. Where are the largest number of settlers?—At the present time the largest number are on the east.

31. What is the average distance between the eastern and western routes?—About four or five miles.

32. As regards the settlers from Mangakahia, where the line junctions to the northwards, would not the settlers to the northwards be equally served no matter which route was taken?—I dare say they would. I would just like to say that it has always been understood that no matter which way the line went, lower down the Main Trunk must go through the Mangakahia Gorge.

33. It does not affect the settlers beyond which line is adopted?—The western line is shorter than the east, and that would affect freights.

34. Supposing there was a deviation of the eastern line arranged that made the eastern line shorter than the western, would not that then be an argument in favour of carrying out the eastern line as serving the back country north of Mangakahia?—No, because the eastern route, as I have shown, goes within six miles of deep water.

35. There has been a deviation surveyed on the eastern line in the neighbourhood of the Houto which will make the eastern route shorter than the western: would not that be an argument in favour of adopting the eastern as against the western route?—No. One of my arguments is that the western is the shorter line. If you make the east shorter than the west that will take that part of my argument away, and of course would affect the settlers beyond Mangakahia.

36. *Mr. Becroft.*] What distance do you think the trade of the Wairoa would come to the railway?—I think the whole of the stock of the river would find its way to the railway.

37. *The Chairman.*] The Wairoa River runs north and south, and the head of the river is about midway?—Practically.

38. Is the rough water of the heads in the course of the river?—In crossing you get the full swell of the ocean. It is almost impossible to cross even at the calmest time without feeling the swell. If it is a west or south-west wind it is extremely rough, and in punting cattle near the heads there is always grave danger.

THOMAS FREDERICK DOWNS examined. (No. 24.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, residing at Tokatoka.

2. Will you kindly make a statement to the Commission?—I have been requested to represent that portion of the country lying between the Tangihua Range and the Wairoa River, comprising the Tokatoka Riding of the Otamatea County, and the Okahu Riding of the Hobson County, and also that portion of the Hobson County lying between the Mangonui River and the Tangihua Range. I advocate the most central Main Trunk line for the benefit of the whole of the country. The outlet from my district will be by the Tokatoka-Mangapai Road to the Main Trunk, wherever it goes. Taking that fact into consideration, the western route will be by far the nearer and best for our country. The distance between the two routes where they cross the Mangapai Road is, I believe, eight to ten miles. Our port for everything we produce on our land is Auckland, and, as already said, the railway direct is a great deal more advantageous than the present mode of punting and transshipping. Most of our stock at present is sold in the local market, and bought by dealers, who drive or ship it to Auckland, where they again sell it. If we have direct railway communication with Auckland we do away with the middleman as far as our produce is concerned. Our country, taking it all round, is good average country. Much of it is ploughable, and responds to cultivation wherever it has been tried. The trouble is that where land is capable of being ploughed we require manures, &c., which, owing to present high freights, are impossible for the ordinary settler to procure. The whole of this portion of the land, practically from the Tangihua Range to the Wairoa River, contains, roughly speaking, 100,000 to 130,000 acres, and at present is carrying about 40,000 sheep, 17,000 cattle, and about 900 horses. That is our present stock, without pigs or other animals. In the Tokatoka Riding there are at the present time over 600 pigs, and the fattening of pigs is becoming a great industry in this portion of the country, and will be more so when we get direct railway communication, for the simple reason that the settlers will then know that their pork will arrive in Auckland in good condition. All this country is well adapted for fattening early lambs for the Auckland market, and also for the growing of oats and chaff, which, with direct communication with Auckland, would be delivered into the Auckland market before any of the southern or even the Wai-kato chaff or oats could get there. We could ripen the oats so that the chaff could be cut and delivered into Auckland by the end of November, and all other produce, such as potatoes and that sort of thing, we can grow practically all the year round. A large part of the country is at present sparsely populated. As already stated by Mr. Hammond, part of the land is held in large areas. If this country were fully developed it could easily carry, without any trouble, double its present quantity of stock. Almost all the open country is suitable for and will grow rape, turnips, oats, or any other produce that the settler desires to grow, provided that it has the necessary manure, which, as I have already stated, with railway connection we would be able to get. As regards the waterways of the Kaipara Harbour and Wairoa River—starting at the Kaipara Harbour, it is bar-bound, and therefore is of no use to us as a seaport for exporting produce. Therefore all our stock and produce must go to Auckland. Our nearest river-ports are Ruawai, Raupo, Tokatoka, and Mititai. If we take the average distance to any of these ports—say, Tokatoka, as the central port—it is practically six miles to the proposed western route and ten miles to the proposed eastern route. We already have good roads from these ports north, all formed by the Government, which give direct communication with the railway. If

you take the average of the country, it means that the whole of the produce of the country, even from the ports, will take the railway in preference to the river, because the settlers will know exactly when their produce will arrive at the Auckland market.

3. *Mr. Evans.*] How long have you resided in this district?—Twenty-four years.

4. How much produce is exported from your district to Auckland at present?—We supply cream to the Maungawhare Dairy Factory.

5. Have you any idea of the amount?—No. It is practically only those along the river-banks who can send their cream.

6. How many settlers are there in your district?—I cannot give the exact numbers, for the reason that I am representing different counties. In the Tokatoka Riding of the Otamatea County there were over four hundred people at the last census.

7. They do not export anything?—They export pork and stock.

8. How far are you from the Kaipara Harbour?—Between fifty and sixty miles to the heads.

9. Railway carriage suits you better than water carriage, then?—Certainly.

10. Water carriage could not compete with the railway?—Not so far as stock and produce are concerned.

11. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Could you give the Commission an idea of the number of stock sent from your district to Auckland per annum?—No.

12. Could you tell the Commission how the stock disposed of are sent to Auckland?—At present the majority are sent by barge from the different ports on the river to Helensville, and there transhipped to Auckland; but sometimes the barge gets to Helensville at a time unsuitable for railway connection, and the cattle have to be paddocked for the night, and collected and entrained next day.

13. You do not ship direct to Auckland from here?—Not now. We used to ship direct from here, but as the line is progressing northward I believe stock are being driven to Te Hana and entrained there for Auckland direct, instead of going by barge to Helensville. It is a common occurrence, I understand, for cattle and sheep to be drowned when crossing the heads.

14. Do not a number of ships trade between the Wairoa River and southern ports?—I think there are three ships.

15. Do those traders bring back freight in the shape of chaff, oats, and potatoes?—Yes.

16. And also general merchandise?—With the exception of bulk lines, I do not think they do.

17. Do they not bring tea and sugar and other groceries?—No. As far as I know, all that comes from Auckland.

18. I suppose you are aware of the fact that those traders coming from southern ports have to fill up with something, and that consequently the freights are low—I have been told that they are as low as 5s. a ton?—The lowest I have heard of is 10s. a ton, and a guarantee of 10 tons had to be given.

19. I am creditably informed that it has been done as low as 5s. a ton?—Quite possibly.

20. You say that the land is capable of growing anything, provided that it is manured: the land is not sufficiently good in this part of the northern district to grow oats and potatoes without the aid of artificial manures?—You must understand that there are thousands of acres in the country I represent that will grow potatoes without manure, but I think you will agree with me that, with the exception of very rich land, any land is better for manure of a certain class.

21. You say that Kaipara Harbour is of no use because of its being a bar harbour?—As regards the shipping of produce direct to the outside markets.

22. What do you call outside markets?—To England or other foreign ports.

23. Is it not a fact that large steamers come up the Wairoa River and take large cargoes of timber to England?—Yes; but that is not produce. I am representing farmers.

24. It is the produce grown by farmers that loads the ships?—Not the timber-ships. They take no produce direct to the foreign markets.

25. Is there much coal used in this district?—In my district, practically none.

26. Is there no coalfield in your district?—Not that I know of.

27. You have mentioned four ports which you say are on the average twelve miles from the western route: would not the produce from the south—oats, chaff, and merchandise—required by settlers be brought by traders from the south and delivered at the ports instead of coming through by rail from Auckland?—No. If we had railway connection I think we would be able to grow our own produce, and ship to Auckland from anywhere on the line; we would not need to ship from the south at all.

28. *Mr. Coom.*] You quoted one advantage from the direct route—viz., doing away with the middleman: how would that be achieved?—We would be able, by sending our stock to the Auckland market, to sell direct to the butchers.

29. Not to the consumers?—No.

30. Then the butcher would be your middleman?—That would be so.

31. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] I understand that your evidence is in reference to the district you were appointed to represent?—Yes.

32. You have stated that you have got good roads: how much produce can you carry from your homestead to Tokatoka?—In winter time it takes me all my time to get in with 2 cwt. or 3 cwt. from Tokatoka, which is three miles away. Sometimes it takes three hours.

33. Is the road metalled?—The first mile from Tokatoka is metalled.

34. Do you think an empty dray could be taken from the back hills to Ruawai?—Not on the present roads.

35. What about the road to Raupo?—From the hills it is practically the same as from Ruawai, with the exception that nearer the river there is some metal.

36. The ports of Ruawai and Raupo are practically closed to you in winter?—Yes.
37. Is any chaff exported from your district?—A considerable amount.
38. What is the quantity of wool and flax shipped?—A considerable quantity of flax used to be carted to Mitaitai, but there is none now, because of the want of a market. An average of about seventy bales of wool is sent through from each of the four ports.
39. Have you any acquaintance with the other districts to the north of your settlement?—Not a great deal. I have been to Whangarei occasionally. I have not been south for some considerable time.
40. Given railway facilities of transit, is your district as capable of producing the ordinary forms of produce as other districts in New Zealand?—Quite capable.
41. The land and climate are quite suitable?—Yes.
42. Although the products are low, the only reason for that is the want of communication?—Yes.
43. Do you require manure in your district any more than any other district does?—No. I have a brother in the Waikato who uses far more manure than I do to the acre—usually double.
44. Is it not a fact that your district is a rich district?—Yes.
45. The Rehia district is a large butter-producing district?—Yes.
46. *Mr. Steadman.*] Which way does butter go out after being manufactured?—By the river to Helensville, and thence to Auckland.
47. Have you ever considered the loss the middleman has in buying at your sales when there is a falling market?—Yes; but we will take the risk of that.
48. How do cattle get drowned in transit?—The water comes into the punt, and the cattle get down, and cannot get up again.
49. Who bears those losses?—The shipper; not always the middleman, as many of the owners ship their own cattle.
50. Are you not accepting the burdens of the middleman if you ship direct to Auckland?—Yes; but at the same time our stock gets through within a day. We practically know the price we are going to get before we send them away. It is a rare occurrence for stock to be killed on the railway.
51. Do you sell cattle by weight or per head?—Per head.
52. *Mr. Becroft.*] What are the freights on manure to the Wairoa?—They average about £1 10s. a ton. I get only a little myself.
53. Would not the passenger traffic go by the railway also?—Yes.
54. Is it not a fact that £6 or £10 per acre has been given for a good while for land at Raupo and Ruawai?—Yes. For one place a man refused £14 an acre.
55. *The Chairman.*] This stock that is bought in your district by cattle-dealers: where does it ultimately find its destination?—At Auckland.
56. Is it sold in the open market or to private dealers?—Both.
57. You say that when the railway is through you will be able to put stock on the railway direct for Auckland market yourselves?—Yes, if we choose to do so.
58. Could you find a market for fat stock?—I am speaking practically of fat stock. We send some stores also.
59. Will it be necessary, after you have the railway, for you to sell first to cattle-dealers, or can you get a direct market with the Auckland freezing-works or the Auckland yards?—We can do so if we choose. We could send fat lambs, or any stock, direct, and it would pay, but at present it does not pay for the ordinary settler to send small lines.

EDWIN HARDING examined. (No. 25.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—At Dargaville. I am a farmer, and have resided here for sixteen years.

2. Perhaps you would like to make a statement to the Commission about this matter?—During my residence here it has been part of my business to travel about the district in connection with the purchase of stock, and over a large area of country north of Otamatea. As a member of the Hobson County Council, I have also had to travel the whole district, to ascertain the best method of developing its resources. By this means I have acquired an intimate knowledge of the whole country from coast to coast, and from Otamatea northwards to the neighbourhood of Hokianga. I have observed that it is a feature of this peninsula that on both coasts there is a very large proportion of poor land. When I first came here the bulk of the interior was covered with forest, largely unexplored. My observations have led me to conclude that there is in the heart of the peninsula, between Otamatea and Hokianga, a solid block of over 1,000,000 acres of fertile country. Taking the points at McCarroll's Gap and Kaikohe, and presuming that the railway will draw traffic from ten miles on either side, you will have a parallelogram containing, roughly, 800,000 acres. I think my knowledge of the country is sufficiently thorough to enable me to say that there are not 20,000 acres of poor land inside that area. The western route, as suggested, would traverse this area from end to end, and the whole of the country is good grazing-land. When developed a large portion of it is suitable for agriculture, dairying, and fruit-growing. It is also to be noted that this block of country is remote from any water carriage, and can only be developed by railway. As to the eastern or western (of the Tangihuas) route, I wish to speak simply from personal observation. The surveys show that the western route is about one mile and a half shorter—that the conviction of well-informed persons is that the western route can be materially shortened at several points. I consider that the configuration of the country, taking it as a whole, lends itself more to better construction and working on

the western route than on the eastern route, because the valleys largely run parallel with the general route on the western line; whereas on the eastern side, particularly between Maungakaramea and Mangakahia, the line runs across high and difficult spurs. There is a great height to be climbed up to Maungakaramea, which has to be descended in a short distance to tide-level on the Wairoa. A considerable proportion of the land traversed on the eastern side is poor in comparison with that on the west; and I submit that the country on the eastern route encounters much more difficulty from floods than the country on the west. I speak more particularly in regard to the Waiotama, the Wairua, and the Mangakahia Rivers. Although the water from these three rivers combines where the western route crosses the Wairoa at Kirikopuni, the flood-water gets away better, and there is not the same congestion. In support of that statement I would point out that there is a bridge, which has been constructed by the Roads Department, at Mangakahia, which is of a larger span and is higher out of the water than the bridge at Tangiteroria, which was constructed by the County Council. I will give you the figures taken from the plans when the works were in operation. The span of the bridge at Mangakahia is 210 ft., and of the one at Tangiteroria 153 ft. You can verify the latter by reference to the Public Works Department. The distance between the two bridges is about six miles in a straight line. On the western route, at Kirikopuni, there is one bridge in place of the three. The western line runs as nearly as possible through the centre as it is possible to run it. Taking the southern portion of the divergent routes in the Mangonui Valley, there is a road from Tokatoka wharf to Mangapai, laid out by the Government, which is a main road from east to west. Very nearly the distance is 30½ miles from wharf to wharf, and by road the eastern route is seven miles and a half from Mangapai wharf, and twenty-three miles from Tokatoka. The western route is fourteen miles from Mangapai wharf, and 16½ from Tokatoka. In the eight miles between Tokatoka, Mangapai Road, and the Wairoa there is no access by road. The question of freights has been already amply dealt with, and I wish simply to emphasize the fact that even on the western route the settlers are farther from the western wharves than they are from the eastern. I would also say, in regard to the question of water communication, that it is not possible to compare the water carriage on the Kaipara with that on the east coast on equal terms, because the water carriage on the Kaipara leaves the traffic at Helensville to be transported by rail, with an extra cost of handling to be added. Also, in the matter of time, the journey from Dargaville to Auckland occupies twelve hours, as against seven hours, on the average, from Whangarei. With regard to bridging the navigable river at Kirikopuni, I am of opinion—and it is confirmed after consultation with the most of the landholders or occupiers above the proposed site—that there is likely to be no traffic above the proposed bridge which would be interfered with. The river being navigable, it is probable that the upper reaches of the Wairoa will be used as feeders to the railway, both for the conveyance of heavy goods and for passenger traffic. I wish the Commission to particularly note that a large portion of the north is devoid of metal. There is none throughout a large part of the Mangonui Valley, and by any of the means at present available it is going to be extremely difficult ever to adequately metal or keep in repair metalled roads in that locality. At the Tangihua Range, at Kirikopuni, and at Mangakahia there is an abundance of good metal, which would be available for ballast and for metalling roads; and I submit that this could be delivered at the railway-stations and at various points along the road. By that means the roads would be metalled from the railway-stations as a centre, and would inevitably induce the country traffic to be brought to the railway-stations to be carried by rail. With regard to the proposed linking-up of the Gap with Whangarei, I understand that matter is within the scope of your Commission. I presume that the question really is, which line should be constructed first? Ultimately, no doubt, the country will all be railed. Having pointed out from my own observation the location and area of the wealth-producing portions of the north, I hold that the objective of a railway should be to develop the greatest resources, and to secure the most traffic for the Railway Department generally. I contend that the opening of the railway from Whangarei to the Bay of Islands district brings the resources and produce of that district into touch with cheap freight and rapid communication by sea with the metropolitan market. I also submit that it is extremely doubtful whether a large proportion of the goods from the Town of Whangarei will be carried over a railway, which, taking the present time-table as evidence, will occupy a very much greater time in reaching Auckland, and upon which the freights, to be profitable, must be heavier. The connection from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei will open up absolutely no new country. It must pass within a very short distance of Mangapai wharf, and therefore come again into competition with cheap and rapid communication by sea.

3. What class of boats go to Mangapai?—The "Coromandel" is, I think, running there regularly, and also scows. The "Coromandel" tenders from Marsden Point. [Statement resumed]: I think it is apparent, therefore, that the railway over these twenty-seven miles will depend for its earnings upon the through freights from Whangarei in the north, and not on the local country, which is already served by cheap freights. I would also like to suggest that the present freights are carried by a company which is, I think, unopposed. If they at any time were driven to cut the rates, I think it is probable that these freights could be materially reduced both in regard to Mangapai and Whangarei. I would point out what appears to me to require to be sacrificed if this connection is made in preference to proceeding with the Main Trunk line. To connect with Whangarei it is estimated that twenty-seven miles of new line is required. To open the country from McCarroll's to Upper Mangakahia will not exceed thirty-eight miles, by a line which will open up new country, and which, as I have endeavoured to make clear, cannot be adequately developed excepting by railway. There is also a block of about 8,000 acres of undeveloped Crown land about twenty-eight miles from McCarroll's. Along the whole western route are groups of Crown tenants. It is the only feasible outlet to a large block of country now

held by small tenants. There are also 4,600 acres of the Girls' High School endowment immediately south of the Wairua. I notice that in other districts the Commission visited, the large amount of stock which passes through Whangarei has been quoted in support of the contention that Whangarei is a centre, and that this gap should be filled up to provide an outlet for the large quantity of stock there. Now, there are four probable sources of the stock which go to Whangarei markets—the Mangonui Valley and Waikielie; the district round Tangiteroria; the Mangakahia Valley, with its sources of supply right through to Kaihu; and the far north, with its centre at Ohaeawai. It is a serious loss to the owners of this stock that they have no direct means of export, the cattle having to be driven many miles to a centre at Whangarei before being shipped. Incidentally I might say that if the line is taken to Whangarei in preference to a central route a large proportion of these cattle would have to travel thirty to forty miles from Mangakahia to the railway for shipment. It has been urged before the Commission that fifteen hundred head of cattle were exported from Whangarei last month. Now, of that number, to my personal knowledge, three hundred went from within five miles of Dargaville, one hundred from Tokatoka and Mangapai Road, one hundred from Tangiteroria, over seventy from Mangakahia, and a large number from Bay of Islands. It has been suggested in evidence that railway connection with Whangarei would advance the dairying industry by providing for the landing of dairy-produce in the freezing-chambers in Auckland at a cheaper freight, and in much quicker time. I venture to challenge both statements, and would point out that the dairy supply from Whangarei is now, notwithstanding the bad communication, drawn largely from the interior. Cream is at present being carted by road twenty-one miles from Tangiteroria, twenty-eight miles from Houto, thirty miles from Parakao, and thirty-five miles from Pakotai. So that to secure the advantage of the alleged facilities in Whangarei, unless the Main Trunk line is constructed, the settlers must continue to cart their produce nearly as far before shipment as the branch railway will give them access to. It has also been contended that the requirements of Mangakahia might be adequately served by the construction of an electric line from Whangarei. In this connection I would urge first that the feasibility of such a service by an electric line has not yet been proved. Secondly, that it would only serve the Mangakahia district at one or two points; and that if this electrical or other railway traction with Whangarei were brought about it would only serve to bring the produce to a point almost as far from Auckland by railway as when it started. Thirdly, that if the Main Trunk line were constructed last, when the settlers' produce has passed over the thirty-five miles of distance it will be that much nearer its destination only; while, on the other hand, if that line is constructed first, dairy factories and cattle-markets will be established on the railway-line, and the settlers' produce will be carried almost directly from the farms to the freezing-chamber or the market. In support of the advisability of constructing the main line by the central route, I would point out that coal has been located in two or three places within three or four miles of Mangakahia. Copper of excellent quality has also been found at several points, while manganese and other minerals are in evidence. In connection with a question asked by Mr. Ronayne, I would like to say that, whatever may be the custom in other districts, I believe it will continue to be the practice in the north to connect with the Auckland market by rail, as local conditions to some extent compel us to take that course. The large extent of poor land which exists between Otamatea and Auckland makes the driving of cattle a severe tax upon their condition. The roads are bad, and I feel sure that the railway will always be the main mode of conveying our live-stock. Another point is that there is a considerable amount of stock sent right through to the Waikato and further south. That is a long distance, and the owners and settlers have found that the railway is always the most profitable method of conveyance. In my opinion, Whangarei is not a cattle-producing centre. Right along the line from Otamatea to the north of Hokianga is a very large cattle-producing district, and in the sending of produce from the far north to the market the matter of expense must be a very great question; and, although none of the lines have been completely surveyed, I think accurate estimates will show a saving from Kaihu to Auckland by the central or western route of thirty miles, the figures being 158 miles by the western route, as against 190 by the Whangarei connection. Another point within the scope of the Commission is the question of connecting the Main Trunk line with other lines in the north. It will be clearly seen from the map that the western route of railway from McCarroll's Gap to Mangakahia, certainly as regards the country, is about midway between the Kaihu line and the Whangarei-Kawakawa line. I would like to emphasize the fact that it is impossible to forecast the future as regards the developments on the Main Trunk line or the establishment of suitable branches. I would therefore urge that it is in the best interests of the country to construct and develop a Main Trunk line which it can be shown would develop the best resources of the Dominion and this part of the country in the best possible way. In the meantime I indorse what Mr. Hammond has urged—that the best connection between the Main Trunk line and the Kaihu line would be from Dargaville and Kirikopuni. Even if the eastern line were adopted, that would still be the best connection. I wish to call attention to the difficulty in regard to statistical evidence. When such evidence is placed before the Commission it must be extremely difficult for the Commission to assure itself of the boundaries within which the witness has compiled his statistics. If the question of population or the occupation of the country were taken into consideration as the foundation for a settlement of the question, the North Island Trunk line must have been carried by way of New Plymouth, and close to the west coast. It is quite true that the line which will give the best results in the establishment of railways may at the time of the inquiry not be in occupation at all, or be very sparsely populated, and yet when the railway was constructed it might prove to be the best route in the interests of the country. That is all I wish to say upon this matter.

4. *Mr. Evans.*] You say you have been sixteen years in this district?—I have been in the district for over thirty years, but in continuous residence for sixteen years.

5. You referred to the difference in the length of the routes, and to the western being the shortest route?—I think it is, but the western route has not been, and could not be, so thoroughly surveyed as the eastern route, partly because the western route is so much covered with forest, and therefore it is not so easy to examine the country, and also because the survey of the eastern route was in operation at the time when the very strong pressure was brought to bear in order to have the western line examined. I think that at Maungakaramea three, if not four, different lines were traversed in order to find the best way of surmounting the difficulty. I do not think that on the western side many alternative routes were examined, but I think that if the surveys had been made further improvements might still have been made in connection with the western side.

6. You think that the country on the eastern side is rougher than that on the western side?—That is my belief.

7. Have you been through both parts of the country?—Yes; almost along the whole of both routes.

8. What amount of land has been disposed of out of the 1,000,000 acres you spoke of?—Speaking roughly, I would say that the Crown still owns from 50,000 to 80,000 acres.

9. Is there any Maori land amongst it?—Yes, but not much, with the exception of one block in the neighbourhood of Kaikohe, where there is a block of 123,000 acres.

10. Has there been much land bought up by syndicates in the 1,000,000 acres you referred to?—There are several blocks, but most of the blocks bought by syndicates have been subdivided.

11. Are there any large holders amongst them?—The Omano Block, held by Mr. Riddell, consists of 12,000 acres, but it is the general opinion that as soon as this question is decided, if the railway goes through it, that land ought to be bought by the Government. I hope the Commission will make a note of that fact. Then there is the Maungaru Block, which was bought by Alfred Harding ten years ago. It consists of 21,000 acres. He is now subdividing the whole block, and has disposed of his interest in a portion of it to fifteen small settlers. How much that leaves him I cannot say. Again, there is the Nukutawhiti Block, up the Mangakahia Gorge.

12. Is all of that land unimproved?—No; the bulk of the Omano Block is improved. At the time that block was owned by the syndicate it would carry nothing, but now it is carrying many thousands of sheep and cattle.

13. Apart from the Maori land and the Crown land, how is the rest of the land you refer to held?—By small settlers.

14. And how much by syndicates?—I could not say, because almost the whole of the land purchased by syndicates has been subdivided.

15. Are there 700,000 acres held by small settlers?—Very nearly.

16. You say that some of the syndicates are improving the land they hold themselves?—Taking the Omano Block, up by the Wairoa, at the time the syndicate purchased it it was undeveloped bush country. Its present condition you will see when you go through. It is carrying a very large quantity of sheep and cattle.

17. Do you think that nearly all the goods would go by rail instead of by steamer to Auckland if the railway were made?—From the centre of this country, certainly.

18. How do you account for so much produce being imported if the land in this district is reported to be so very good?—In the first place, this country has been almost entirely neglected until within the last few years. Consequently those who have taken up land, with the exception of one or two syndicates, have not been farmers, but men who have saved money and invested it in sections. Another difficulty has been that wages, owing to the gumfields and to the sawmills, have been extremely high. It has paid men who have taken up bush sections better to leave their sections and go and work for wages, and the syndicates who have taken up these lands have been unable to secure labour at a remunerative rate for working them.

19. Do you think the western railway, if constructed, would pay any interest over working-expenses on the capital cost for some years to come?—I believe it would be a paying line.

20. What would make it pay?—The increasing development of the country. There is a large amount of stock which at present finds its way to market by various methods. If they could be given an opportunity to get to the market a very large proportion of the country would be brought into cultivation. Again, dairying companies would be formed, as the larger amount of the land will be turned at once into dairying country, whereas it is impossible under present conditions to get produce to market, on account of the want of means of transport.

21. Do you not think the steamer freights would be reduced where water carriage is available when the railway was started?—Not sufficiently to permit of profitable carting to the coast on the eastern side.

22. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Can you give the Commission any idea as to the amount of timber that would be available for traffic on the railway by either route?—I think one or two other witnesses would get nearer to it, but I understand that in the forest reserve at the head of Kirikopuni there are something like 200,000,000 ft. in that reserve and the adjacent one.

23. Would the western route serve that trade better than the eastern one?—Undoubtedly that trade would go by the western route.

24. I understand you are advocating the speedy completion of the central route as against any expenditure being made on branch lines, which I take to mean a branch line as between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei, and the connection between the Kaihu line and Kaikohe. Am I correct?—Not as regards the extension of the Kawakawa line to Kaikohe. I believe that that extension was a most judicious procedure on the part of the Government.

25. It is understood that the line is going on from Kawakawa to Hokianga. I referred particularly to the connection between the Kaihu line and the Main Trunk and the Main Trunk

and Whangarei. Is it your opinion that no expenditure should be made on that connection in the meantime?—Not until the Main Trunk Railway reaches Mangakahia.

26. Do you think that the connection between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap should also stand down?—Yes, until the line reaches Mangakahia.

27. You have drawn a point of difference between the eastern and western routes. As far as I understand, this difference is very small. I suppose you understand that too?—Yes. I said about a mile and a half.

28. Does not that affect the country north of the northern junction of the different routes, and any country between McCarroll's Gap and Mangakahia?—It does, in this way: The question we are considering to-day affects every person between here and Auckland, and if this line is carried by the best route where it will join the Main Trunk line, we will then have a better service, we will have more frequent trains, and therefore whatever the difference is in favour of the route it must affect the whole of the line right through. If we can save one mile between Tangiteroria and Mangakahia it is all in favour of the service paying.

29. You are of opinion that the shorter route materially affects the question?—Yes.

30. What knowledge have you that the western route will be shorter than the eastern one?—The figures issued by the Public Works Department.

31. They are simply trial-survey lines, and the route, when located, may be shorter on the other side?—I understand them to be official surveys, from which it is shown that the western line is shorter by a mile and a half.

32. Are you aware that there is a proposal to divide the eastern line at the northern end?—I have seen the route along which it is proposed to make that line, and I do not think it would shorten it.

33. At what points on either of the routes do you think the distance could be reduced?—From Pakotai, and at the point of junction from here to the Wairoa River. I am distinctly of opinion that if a thoroughly careful survey were made, and a trial line run, a material saving could be effected. I believe that immediately south of the Wairoa there is one point where, unless some reason can be shown, it is patent to a layman that a very considerable saving could be effected.

34. Can you make any suggestion as to the shortening of the eastern route?—No; I am not in a position to show that any material saving could be made.

35. Can you indicate any point along either of those routes where metal can be obtained?—There is metal at several points through the Omano Block, at Mangakahia, and on the Tangihua Range. Metal is also obtainable on the eastern route at Maungakaramea. Between the river at Kirikopuni and Mangakahia very good limestone is to be found. On the Maungakaramea there is volcanic rock.

36. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] You might explain the reason why you mention metal as a very important item on the western route?—Because the railway would earn revenue by the conveyance of metal for the making of roads, and also from the fact that the making of roads to the railway would induce traffic by the railway in preference to going by sea. Then if the railway can supply metal at the stations, and by that means afford facilities for metalling the roads and giving access to the land, it must have a material effect on the traffic going over the railway, as against going by sea.

37. Can you give us an idea as to the cost of metalling roads in the unmetalled portions of Hobson County, and in those where metal is handy?—I prefer that you should put that question to the engineer, because he has the statistics at his fingers' ends. It has cost us up to £1 a yard.

38. Would it cost less than that if the railway were made?—I understand it has averaged us, to the fairly accessible points, about 10s. a yard; but then you have always to remember that we are for the most part metalling accessible roads. There are roads like the Mangonui Valley, in regard to which it is a problem where we can get metal to the roads at anything like a feasible sum at all.

39. Do the remarks as to the absence of metal apply to the eastern route as well as to the western?—Metal is very easily found outside our country, because there are more available good connecting-roads from Maungakaramea, and it necessarily follows that metal can be taken over the wider scope of roads on the east coast more cheaply than on the west. We have no practicable means of getting metal into the Mangonui Valley from any quarry.

40. In regard to railway-construction in the north, what point has been spoken of most frequently as the objective?—Kaikohe, Hokianga, and Mangakahia.

41. If any proposal were made to pass by Mangakahia, what would you say to it?—I believe it has been openly urged in regard to taking the line to Mangakahia that it would not be long before the Trunk line would pass within a short distance of that valley. Surveys have been made of that spot, and I know for a fact that the settlers balloted for sections there on the understanding that there was a prospect of railway connection being given to them.

42. Have the conditions in regard to advertisements of the Mangakahia land ever mentioned the railway at all?—I have not seen them. I am not a land speculator.

43. Have you any knowledge of the freezing-works about to be established at Whangarei, or as to why the promoters have not gone on with them?—Yes, I have some knowledge of that matter, and I think the probable reason that they have not been started before is because a large number of settlers felt that the works were not sufficiently easy of access. There was a very considerable uncertainty as to the prospect of a proper connection by sea. I might also say that a similar fact, and the question of the connection by sea, has been the cause of a failure to establish freezing-works in the Kaipara.

44. In the future, if the north is developed and better roading given, do you think Opua will become a centre for freezing-works?—It is very difficult to forecast the future, but I see no reason why there should not be freezing-works there if there are sufficient means of conveying stock to the works.

45. For the Kaikohe district, would not Russell be much more advantageously situated as regards the establishment of such works?—For Kaikohe, Hokianga, and the north.

46. And if Mangakahia were connected with Kaikohe by rail, for that district also?—If the freezing-works were at the Bay of Islands I should say that, owing to the better harbour facilities, there would be a better prospect of their being a success at the Bay of Islands than at Whangarei. There would also, by the connection you have mentioned, be a better means of conveying stock to Russell or Opua as a centre than to Whangarei.

47. You would agree with the statement that, owing to the bar at the Kaipara, the ports of this peninsula must be on the east?—Certainly. Our facilities for treating our harbour as a means of import and export are very much inferior to those on the east.

48. On what account?—First, on account of the bar, which, although deep, is a very uncertain one; and secondly, on account of the long distance stock have to go by water before reaching their market.

49. In reference to the proposed Dargaville-Kaihu connection, you advocate a connection between Kirikopuni and Dargaville: what land would that open up?—Five miles of Native land, poor in quality; another four miles of comparatively small holdings: the balance partly through the Maungaru Estate and partly through small settlements.

50. All of which lies on the river-bank?—Yes.

51. Do you not think the connection from Taita to Mangakahia would open up and develop the country to a larger extent?—It precisely brings about one of the conditions I have mentioned—viz., that it is impossible to foretell the future. If you establish freezing-works at the Bay of Islands, undoubtedly the line would be in the proper place if connection were made with Mangakahia or with the Kaihu-Dargaville line. If the development of the country takes place in other directions the objective might be difficult to arrive at.

52. If the objective is to reach the nearest and best port, would not the link be better from Taita towards Mangakahia?—Under the circumstances stated, the Bay of Islands would be the nearest and best port, but that is a question which I think ought to be left until further development takes place.

53. What is the nature of the country between Taita and Mangakahia?—A lot of it is good stock country, some is rich limestone, and a small portion, comparatively, is poor gumfields.

54. *Mr. Steadman.*] You refer to Mangapai and a connection with that place for the Main Trunk line at the east coast?—It would have no connection with what I call the Trunk route.

55. Is not that some distance from the coast?—I do not know how far it is from the mouth of Whangarei Harbour.

56. It is twenty-eight miles. How are the people from Waipu going to be served by such a line?—They are within easy distance of a road which gives them access to the line near to McCarroll's Gap; but I think it is unnecessary to debate that question now, as affecting the Waipu district.

57. Waipu is on the route, and therefore those people are interested in the matter?—No, because the access for people in the neighbourhood of Tokatoka will be by the railway and Tokatoka-Mangapai or neighbouring roads, whereas the access from Waipu will be to a point to the south.

58. Do you know the country in that locality?—Fairly well.

59. Do you know there is a range of hills that they cannot get through between Waipu and McCarroll's?—I think there is a road which would take them to the Gap.

60. Is not the only road Carr's Road—the outlet from Waipu towards Whangarei for the people of Waipu to take to get to the Main Trunk?—They can go to Whangarei, but their real point of access to the line will be in the neighbourhood of McCarroll's Gap.

61. By what road?—I do not know the name of the road.

62. Both are very arduous and difficult roads to get at?—That is my belief.

63. You think those people should not be considered at all?—I do not say so, but I do not think that this question of east or west as regards the Waipu district has any material bearing on the main question.

64. On what do you base your opinion?—I know the country sufficiently well to form that opinion.

65. What knowledge have you?—I have what I consider a sufficient knowledge of that part of the country to arrive at the definite conclusion that the proper outlet for the Waipu district is in the neighbourhood of McCarroll's Gap.

66. What are the definite facts that bring you to that conclusion?—I have no information to give you.

67. You mention coal: where have the seams been found in the Mangakahia?—One between Avoca Settlement and the Karaka Block, on the road from Tangowahine to Mangakahia, on land held by a Crown tenant.

68. How far from the nearest water?—Eight or nine miles, and about the same distance from the nearest railway. There is a very easy road between it and the central route by the Tangohine Valley.

69. Where would it strike?—At Parakao.

70. Where else does coal crop out?—Within about four miles, in a straight line from the railway at the head of Tangowahine Valley.

71. Where is copper found?—In the Houto Mountain, and also in the Mangakahia Gorge, beyond the junction of the two routes.

72. You also mentioned manganese: do you know it is practically unsaleable at present?—I believe so.

73. No one would work that?—You cannot foretell the future.

74. *Mr. Becroft.*] Will you tell the Commission what the quality of the land is from McCarroll's and along the eastern route up to Maungakaramea?—As far as I have been on the eastern route, I found it in some degree the boundary between the good land and the poor. There is a considerable quantity of good land, and the poor land lies to the east of the eastern route, and some again on the line that traverses it.

75. And all the good is on the western side?—It is almost all good on the western side of the eastern line.

76. Would you consider this large block of land of over 1,000,000 acres compares favourably with any other large block of land in the Dominion as regards railway-construction?—It will compare on equal terms with any block of hilly land that I am acquainted with. We can carry an equal amount of stock on this land to what is carried on the best land I am acquainted with in Hawke's Bay.

77. Will it compare with any million-acre block where railways have been constructed?—I believe it will produce equally with any other similar block in the Dominion involving the same nature of country.

78. *Mr. Steadman.*] Where does the 50,000 to 80,000 acres of Government land that remains to be tapped by the western route lie?—8,000 acres at the head of the Kirikopuni Valley. There is also about 8,000 acres of Crown land at the head of the Awakino, in from Dargaville; and running from Tutamoe to Karaka there is a block of 6,000 or 8,000 acres. There is also, above the point of junction, another block—in fact, I think I have underestimated the Crown land and the Native land.

79. *Mr. Coom.*] Taking a probable connection between the Kaihu Valley Railway and the Main Trunk line with the present outlet at Auckland, can you recommend a connection from Dargaville to Kirikopuni or the Taita-Mangakahia connection?—I should certainly recommend the Kirikopuni connection, because from about Taita you are going more or less northwards and back on the Main Trunk line from the destination. I think it would open up good country all through. The distance is greater there than from the railway-station at Dargaville to Kirikopuni.

80. *The Chairman.*] You know the Main Trunk line?—Yes.

81. Do you think it is a good business proposition to continue that line from McCarroll's Gap along the Mangakahia to Kaikohe?—I am quite sure that, taking as an example the centre of this Island at the time the Main Trunk line was proposed, when it was almost undeveloped, but has now become populated and the line a payable proposition, the result in the present case would be the same as regards the development of the country north of McCarroll's Gap. It would be an absolutely sound business proposition for the Dominion to construct that railway, and quickly. I believe it will pay, and the country will then carry a large population.

82. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Can you give us the number of cattle and sheep now carried on the 1,000,000 acres you refer to, and what it would carry in the future when fully developed?—I could not hazard a suggestion as to what it is carrying now, but as to the future I would suggest that it will carry nearly two sheep to the acre.

THOMAS WEBB examined. (No. 26.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, residing at Te Kopuru. I would like to say that I am not particularly interested in the routes of the railway, as my district is too far away from it. I simply speak as a citizen of New Zealand, and I want to see the best route adopted. The chief reason why I advocate the western route is that it crosses the Wairoa at deep water at Kirikopuni. I consider that the railway would benefit the river and that the river would benefit the railway. Roughly speaking, there is about twenty-five miles of navigable river above where the railway would strike the river at Omano below Kirikopuni. I consider that ten miles below Omano it would pay the people to go up to the railway, instead of going down. That much of the river navigation which is now served by steamer would be brought to the railway, and help to feed it. The railway would help the freights there. I cannot say what they would be, but at present they are £1 15s. a ton to Tangiteroria, by reason of the fact that three handlings are required. I wish to corroborate one part of the evidence of Mr. Hammond, as to the floods on the river on the eastern route. The eastern route crosses the Tangihua River, on which I have myself been stopped by flood coming from Whangarei through to the Wairoa. In addition to that, the Mangakahia River floods are excessive. I have been up there in a launch when there has been 20 ft. of a flood in it. The floods in the winter are liable to be excessive on the Mangakahia, Waiotoma, and the Tangihua, whilst on the western route the line would cross where the river is wide, and floods would not be likely to interfere with the railway. Another point is this: The Hobson County Council went a little while ago to the Tangihua settlers to lay out a little money, and the settlers told the Council that they got their freight into Mangapai at 5s. per ton, and if they had a road they would have good communication, which they would not complain of at all. They were urging the Council to make them a connection with Mangapai, and not to Tangiteroria. I am neither an engineer nor an expert, but I know that on the western route the railway would go to the Wairoa River down the Mangonui Valley generally, and the expenditure would not be so great as on the eastern route, because the valley runs north and south, whereas on the eastern side the spurs run east and west, and they would have to be crossed or gone round. That bears out what Mr. Harding said, that on the western side the grades are not so heavy as on the eastern side.

2. *Mr. Coom.*] Are you aware that the eastern route also crosses the Wairoa at deep water?—I did not understand that. The water is not navigable at the falls. It is navigable in the Wairoa River, a little above the junction, for boats.

3. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] When you speak of the Kirikopuni, you mean by good-sized boats?—By sea-going steamers.

4. That same meaning cannot be attached to any navigation above Tangiteroria?—It cannot apply to anything above the junction.

5. You are a member of the County Council, and represent Marsden and Kaipara on the Hospital Board?—Yes.

6. In that latter capacity you frequently travel from Wairoa to Whangarei?—Yes.

7. In speaking of the flooding of the rivers you speak from personal observation?—I do.

8. As a member of the County Council you interview the settlers?—We went to the extreme boundary of the Hobson County, just on the eastern spurs of the Tangihua Range. It took us two or three hours to ride back to Tangiteroria.

9. The freight to these settlers, you say, was £1 15s. to Tangiteroria, and then, I suppose, there was cartage?—Yes.

10. Did they give you any idea of the cost of carting their goods from Mangapai to their homesteads?—It costs them £1 per ton to get it in. That would be materially reduced with a decent road.

11. *Mr. Steadman.*] This Tangihua Stream that you refer to has steep banks, has it not?—Yes.

12. Do you know it has been bridged?—Yes, it is now.

13. What length of bridge would be required?—Not a big one. The county had £300 to build the bridge and approaches.

14. What did the approaches cost?—I cannot say from memory. It may have been £150.

15. The Waitotama is another narrow creek?—Yes.

16. Do you know that the Mangakahia Valley, where the bridge is, widens out?—I do not think the valley widens out at the bridge.

17. Does not the river at that place turn very sharply?—I do not know that it turns any more sharply than at any other part. The river is all angles.

18. When you stand on the bridge does not the other side of the bridge turn right in, thus causing the river to rise very rapidly?—It rises very rapidly. The river turns down to the junction. When Mr. Harding and I were there the two rivers were not perceptible except by the willows. We took the launch over the roadways.

19. What is the depth of the Mangakahia?—When it is low you can wade over; in flood time it is bank to bank wide, and over the bridge.

20. Is that where the railway crosses?—I do not know.

21. *Mr. Becroft.*] You made the statement that the settlers on the river for ten miles below the western crossing would use the railway: for what reason do you limit to ten miles?—I just gave that as an estimate. If I lived at Tangowahine and the railway crossed at Omano, I would go by the railway if I desired to go to Auckland.

22. You would not go that way from where you are now?—No; it would be too far away to affect us at all.

23. You have resided in this district a long time?—Yes.

24. Would you corroborate Mr. Harding about the enormous tract of good land?—I believe from my knowledge that there are large tracts of good land to the west of the Tangihuas which have not been developed, because of the want of communication.

FREDERICK WILLIAM PEDDLE examined. (No. 27.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, residing at Hohanga, about five miles up the Wairoa from Dargaville.

2. Will you kindly make a statement to the Commission on the subject-matter of our inquiry?—Owing to Auckland's present large population and natural position, it must be for all time the port for the northern peninsula. Ocean-going ships are constantly being built larger, as they pay best, and the increasing tendency is to send them only to the large distributing centres, where they can obtain the greatest amount of freight. For this reason the lines of railway should be through the centre of the peninsula, leading direct to Auckland, where we can get quick despatch for perishable goods to the markets of the world. The northern peninsula's pastoral products will probably for all time consist of such perishable goods as meats, fruits, and dairy-produce. The City of Auckland at present is our best market for all fat stock during eight months of each year, and as the city's population is likely to grow as fast as our products in quantity, it will continue to be our best market. For this reason quick and cheap transit by rail for our fat stock to Auckland is necessary. Owing principally to loss by shipping stock by Wairoa to Auckland, at present the small farmer has no chance of obtaining the full benefit of his industry, as the steamers will only take full loads of stock, thus forcing the farmer to often sacrifice his stock to the dealers, instead of being able to send consignments by the railway to the Auckland market or to the freezing-chambers for export. It frequently occurs that barges and steamers are delayed during transit by rough weather, causing intense suffering to the stock and consequent loss to the owners. It sometimes happens that whole punt-loads of cattle are capsized into the sea, with the loss of a number of animals, and the balance so knocked about as to be rendered unfit for sale for months afterwards. The unloading from barge and steamer causes further loss and injury to the stock. It entails the necessity of the farmer or his agent going with the stock, and consequent loss of time, to take care of them, and unship and entrain them at Helensville. It usually takes two days for our stock to arrive in Auckland after leaving the farm in Wairoa by steamer and rail, whereas by train they could be entrained in the morning and sold or slaughtered in the afternoon in Auckland. By putting the railway on the western side of the Tangihua Range,

and giving easy and quick transit, with its attendant comforts, the northern Wairoa district, having a large area of good land and mild climate and abundant rainfall, will become the premier dairy county of New Zealand. The present railway of Dargaville and Main Trunk should be linked up by a direct connecting-line. From the western route at a point near Kirikopuni to Dargaville a practically level line could be obtained of a not greater distance than twelve miles. There are natural valleys in a nearly direct route that could be followed.

2A. *Mr. Evans.*] How much produce is being exported at the present time?—I am not in a position to give the quantities. I know, however, that there are large quantities of butter, and that the land is of good quality, and that fat stock of excellent quality is raised.

3. You do not grow potatoes or maize?—Quantities of maize are grown on the flat land, and for that purpose this Wairoa land is the best in New Zealand.

4. Why do you import oats?—The reason is that labour is so troublesome to get, and also that the cost of freight has retarded the full development of the land.

5. You will always have to pay for labour?—Yes; but we cannot export from here, because of the cost of freight to outside.

6. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] You have had a large experience in other parts of the Dominion, have you not?—Yes, I have been a sheep-farmer in the Gisborne district for fifteen years, and also in Hawke's Bay for a great number of years prior to that. I have been a farmer since I knew what a beast was. I have also had a considerable experience in Queensland.

7. You can speak of the qualities of this district as compared with Gisborne or Hawke's Bay?—Yes. Acre for acre, it is as good as Gisborne. The flat lands along the river-banks are equal to the best of the Gisborne district.

8. Taking the country generally?—Acre for acre, it will produce equal with any other province in New Zealand. We also get top prices for our wool and fat stock when we get them through in a satisfactory condition, which is very seldom.

9. You heard Mr. Harding's statement that 1,000,000 acres would carry two sheep to the acre?—I am not prepared to corroborate that, because I have not seen sufficient of the country.

10. From the knowledge which you have of the portion of the country which you know, would you corroborate that statement?—Yes.

11. *Mr. Becroft.*] What reasonable time is taken in breaking in bush land for the plough?—It would depend somewhat on the nature of the bush.

12. Take light bush?—I was in the Gisborne district a few days ago, and I saw under cultivation land which was under heavy forest fifteen years ago.

13. It would take, say, fifteen years to bring bush land into ploughable condition?—That would be so in the ordinary course of events. It could be done, of course, in one year if the labour was put on.

14. Is it not the cost of bringing the land into cultivation rather than the cost of labour that has retarded the agricultural industry in this district?—Yes, it is the difficulty of getting rid of the stumps. It will take a considerable time before bush land can be brought in for agriculture.

15. In the meantime it will be a profitable business to carry sheep and stock?—Yes.

16. Have you much maize country?—All the flats adjacent to the river are splendid for the cultivation of maize.

17. If the railway carries maize to Auckland at the rate of 10s. per ton, would that induce farmers to go in for maize-growing?—I am not prepared to say it would become the same profitable industry that dairying is.

DARGAVILLE, MONDAY, 24TH APRIL, 1911.

ELLIS REES ELLIS examined. (No. 28.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—At Dargaville. I have been for many years a settler in the district, but at present hold a temporary appointment as a gum-ranger under the Government.

2. Do you wish to make a statement to the Commission?—I am not a member of the Railway League, but am speaking entirely from my own knowledge. The first need of the north is a Main Trunk line, giving the settlers access to the world's markets, and to insure the best results it is necessary first to construct the railway so as to traverse the best land. The second consideration is the most suitable route for connecting future branch lines; thirdly, to provide a quick returning revenue at the least possible cost. The other considerations are the number of settlers that can be placed on the proposed route, and whether the land belongs to the State or whether it is held for speculative purposes. Speaking on the first question, I may say that I have a fair knowledge of the proposed eastern and western routes, and have no hesitation in saying that the land on the western route is far superior to that on the eastern. On the eastern route Maungatapere is good land; Ruatangata is gum land; Whatitiri is good land; from Poroti to Parakao is land of mixed quality, with a large percentage of poor fern and tea-tree land. I have a litho. plan here describing some Crown lands on the eastern route—two sections on the Whangarei-Mangakahia Road, on the eastern route, are valued at 12s. 6d. per acre, and described as heavy clay soil of inferior quality on fern land, and covered with manuka and rushes. You will notice by the description on the plan that the land adjoining the Kirikopuni Road is valued at £1 8s. per acre. This land is in the direction of the western route. The suggested connection from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei would traverse very inferior land, and have no prospect of

being a revenue-earning connection. As to the question which is the most suitable Main Trunk route for future branch connection, there can be no doubt that the western route is the most needed, and will give the best results, because the settlers on the eastern route are fairly well served with roads and water, giving them an access to open markets. They would not be likely to pay £1 5s. per ton for railway freight when they have water carriage for 7s. 6d. on the western route. The land at present improved and occupied is capable of producing more valuable produce than it is at present yielding, but for want of roads or railway connection the settlers have to produce what they can get to the market, and cannot consider the purposes for which their land is most suited. Branch lines will be required in the future both east and west of the Main Trunk. The Main Trunk at Mangakahia will undoubtedly require an eastern branch connection with the Kawakawa line, so as to give access to Opuā, which is undoubtedly the best deep-water port north of Auckland. Speaking of the immediate earning-power of the railway on either route, I am convinced that a very large amount of revenue will accrue from timber freights on the western route—a very great deal more than is likely to accrue on the eastern route. On the western route there is a large kauri forest belonging to the Crown, which should be reserved until the railway is constructed. It contains from 10,000,000 ft. to 12,000,000 ft. of kauri, which with present facilities would not bring more than 2s. per 100 superficial feet. As to royalty, I have every reason to believe that if a railway were put through the western route it would bring 5s. per 100 ft. in royalty, while the freights on this timber would reach a very considerable amount. As to the course of construction, I wish to state that the western route, crossing the Wairoa River, is the best point for a high-level bridge. The Mangakahia, Wairua, and Waiotama Rivers would have to be bridged if the eastern route were adopted. As to the other consideration, the number of settlers and the benefit conferred on them by the proposed route, water connection being much cheaper, the Main Trunk would not be made use of by the Maungatapere settlers to any great extent; therefore more settlers would derive a great amount of benefit from the western route. At present freights from Auckland to settlers on the western route range from £1 10s. to £2 5s. per ton. As to my proposition about the land on the proposed route belonging to the State or being held for speculative purposes, if the latter is the case, then a fixed value should be placed on it, and it should be acquired by the State before the line is put through. I wish to put in a lithograph map of the sections offered at the last ballot for lands in the Mangakahia, taken on the 27th March last, and showing the sections on the eastern route the railway would traverse. Sections 5A and 6, referred to in this plan, are on the Mangakahia Road.

3. Does your information agree with the description on the lithograph?—Yes. It is heavy clay soil of inferior quality, fern land covered with manuka and rushes. From McCarroll's Gap right through on the western route the land is good throughout.

4. *Mr. Coom.*] Which do you refer to as the western route?—From Kirikopuni to the Mangakahia Valley, close to Tangihua Range.

5. Could the State forest reserve be tapped by the eastern route?—It is more feasible by the western route.

6. How far away would it be from the eastern route?—About four miles. Tutamoe State Forest was reserved some years ago, and the timber has been sold for 3s. 9d. per hundred, while before being reserved it could not be sold for 6d. per hundred. In regard to the bridging of the Wairoa River, on the western route only one bridge would be required, on account of the natural formation of the country being high, in place of three bridges if the other route were taken.

7. *Mr. Evans.*] Do you think the Government should acquire any blocks of land on the line of route?—Not all blocks of land, but any land held for speculative purposes, in order to give the settlers a chance of obtaining the increased value.

8. Is there any Native land in your district?—Yes, but not on the western route. It is all Government and private land there.

9. How many settlers are located on the western route?—I could not say.

10. Has much land been taken up in this district?—It is being gradually brought under grass, but for want of roads nothing else can be done with it at present.

11. How long does it take to clear land and get it into cultivation?—A number of years in some places, but a shorter time in others. It depends on the nature of the bush.

12. We were told that a man took fifteen years to get his land into grass: do you agree with that?—If a man has energy and money, and roads to his farm, he can do it in a couple of years, but not without.

13. There are settlers who have held land for fifteen years, and have not got it cleared for cultivation yet: why is that?—Because they found it more profitable to graze.

14. Do not many settlers who have no cattle make their living by getting out gum?—Not many go gum-digging now.

15. Why is that?—The place was settled at first with the assistance of the gum-digging, and the pioneer settlers had to depend on it, but of recent years they have got beyond that stage, and depend on the cattle.

16. What is the size of your section?—I have not one. I am living in Dargaville; I have sold out the place I had—480 acres.

17. *Mr. Ronayne.*] You spoke of the necessity for the construction of a branch line later on to connect with the Grahamtown-Kawakawa-Opuā Railway?—Not with the Grahamtown line.

18. You meant a branch line from Mangakahia to Opuā, *via* Kawakawa?—Yes.

19. Are you not aware that the Main Trunk line junctions at Kaikohe?—Yes.

20. And would give by that means a connection with Opuā?—Yes.

21. Then, your proposal is to have an additional branch line?—Yes. I am convinced that in the future there will be a connection with Mangakahia and practically with Opuā, as it is the best seaport north of Auckland.

22. You will have a connection when the line is through to Kaikohe and the construction completed to Kawakawa?—I grant that; but it will not be a paying line unless it takes the course I indicate.

23. You think the country is of such a fertile nature that the building of a branch line from the Mangakahia to Opuia would be justified?—Yes.

24. In addition to the communication you already have with Kaikohe?—Yes.

25. Is it not possible to work the State forest by floating the logs down the rivers?—Yes. I have had a great deal of experience in timber, and I know that the timber you cut and cart from the forest is worth 1s. 6d. per hundred more than the timber you have to depend on the floodwaters to carry down.

26. For what reason?—For the reason that there is no chance of losing the timber, and the sap is not damaged.

27. Have you considered the freight from the bush to the mill?—Yes; my opinion is a mill should be put in the bush, where the timber should be cut. The timber could then be sent in all directions where it is required by the settlers. For shipment it would be railed to the Wairoa and shipped from Kaipara Harbour.

28. Where would you get your produce from in the event of this line being made?—From Auckland, *via* the Main Trunk.

29. Would you get your groceries, such as flour and sugar and everything required, by rail from Auckland?—Yes, anything within a reasonable radius of the railway. The cheap freights from the south now depend on the timber industry, which is a diminishing one, so naturally we shall have to rely on the rail from Auckland.

30. Then later on, when the timber supplies are exhausted in the district, there will be no cheap return freights from the South Island?—I suppose so.

31. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What is the bush you speak of at Patakarau?—It is a climatic reserve.

32. You know that locality: if the timber were available, would it be sent out by the eastern or western route?—The natural course of that timber would be towards the western route, but if taken out by the water it would go by the eastern route.

33. What is your idea as to connecting the Dargaville-Kaihu line with the Main Trunk?—It will be absolutely necessary in the near future.

34. Can you give us any idea as to the best course for the development of the country?—The best course would be to go from the Awakino and connect with Pokeno, which is the best part of the Mangakahia district. By connecting with the Pokeno on the western side of the Tutamoe Range you traverse good country, and connect with the line at the head of the Mangakahia. It would then be an everlasting life for the railway, and not a timber life only.

35. How would you bring the Waipoua Forest in connection with the main line?—By continuing the present line from Kaihu.

36. *Mr. Steadman.*] Where were you residing as a settler?—Behind Taita, up Tutamoe.

37. What title had you?—Freehold.

38. And the same land is in the market now at £3 per acre?—I sold three years ago.

39. In describing this route you started at Maungatapere, but I would like you to start at McCarroll's Gap and tell us if the land to Mameretu is the same class of land as that at Maungatapere?—I told you I was not conversant with the land there; but the eastern portion of Waikiekie is poor land.

40. What is the land like at Tauraroa?—Good land.

41. What is the quality of the land at Ruarangi?—It is all good land about the proposed deviation.

42. I am asking you about the eastern route: do you know the two routes?—Yes.

43. Do you know the Parish of Ruarangi? What is the quality of the soil?—I have told you about the portions I know, but I am not familiar with the names of each particular locality.

44. Do you know Maungakaramea?—It is good land—clay country.

45. Is not a great portion of it volcanic?—Yes.

46. What about the Tangihuas?—Good grazing-country, also clay country.

47. Now go on to Poroti and Whatitiri?—It is good land.

48. Is it not good volcanic soil?—Yes.

49. Do you know what land has been sold at there recently?—No.

50. Would it surprise you to know that it has fetched £12 per acre?—No.

51. Taking the eastern route, what about the land on the banks of the Mangakahia Valley?—There is a stretch of good country there occupied by Mr. Rawnsley, who has a large farm at Poroti.

52. Is it good land at Kaitaia?—Yes.

53. Do you know how far Ruatangata is from the eastern line?—No.

54. What is the quality of the land there?—Fair, but not good.

55. What is the land between Ruatangata and the eastern line like?—Mixed country—good and bad. I have not been over that piece of country.

56. Do you know Manoa's place?—I do not know the individual settlers.

57. Do you know D. Finlayson's place?—No.

58. You made a statement about the freights: have you not left something out of your calculation in that matter?—No.

59. Have not you omitted the cost of carriage from the water to the settler's homestead?—Certainly not, because they would have to connect with the railway just the same.

60. If the eastern line went through Maungatapere they would not have very much carting, would they?—The settlers are not going to use the railway when it costs them twice as much as by carting.

61. How much does it cost to get goods from Poroti, fourteen miles from Whangarei?—£1 per ton, while the water carriage is 7s. 6d. to Whangarei from Auckland.

62. Do you not think, if the freight was £1 5s. per ton by the Main Trunk, they would use the railway?—No; that is not my figure. I was talking about the freights, and not the cost between the railway and the settlement.

63. Do you know what the freight to Whatitiri is?—No.

64. Do you think that if they had to pay 7s. 6d. water carriage and £1 for cartage, they would use the road when they could get it by the Main Trunk for £1 5s.?—No; but I say that the Maungatapere settlers would not avail themselves of the Main Trunk. I do not refer to Poroti.

65. You said that most of the settlers would be served by this line: where are the most numerous settlements?—Within a very close distance of the proposed junction at McCarroll's Gap.

66. Are there not a good many settlers at Maungatapere?—There are a good few there.

67. What about Ruatangata?—There are also a good many there.

68. What about the country lying to the east of the line, and north of the Wairoa River?—Yes, that is settled also.

69. What about the other settlements at Hikurangi and Aponga?—Yes, the eastern line would benefit them, as they have no direct communication with the southern part.

70. Is most of the population of the North Auckland peninsula on the eastern side—from McCarroll's Gap northwards?—Yes, but they are served by a railway already.

71. Taking a point between the two railway routes, where do the most settlements lie?—I believe we have equally as many on this side of such a line as there are on the eastern side.

72. *Mr. Becroft.*] Would the Ruatangata settlers be better served by the present Whangarei-Kawakawa line than by the eastern route?—They would be better served by the eastern route.

73. You said that McCarroll's Gap—Whangarei connection would never pay: supposing the western route were adopted, would you still speak like that of a connection with Whangarei by the western route at its nearest point?—I think, in the interests of the country, the western route would be the better.

74. If the western route were adopted, would the same objection lie in respect to a connection with Whangarei?—From a paying point of view, yes.

BENJAMIN EMRYS WILLIAMS examined. (No. 29.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a storekeeper, residing at Dargaville.

2. Would you make a statement to the Commission?—I will confine myself principally to making a statement regarding the localities I am absolutely acquainted with, and that will practically cover the whole of the country north of Dargaville from the Wairoa River extending right up to Kaikohe. I have been resident here for about twelve years. Before that time I was three years in Kaikohe. I am well acquainted with the whole of the country extending from Dargaville, and below it, too, for that matter, right up to the North Cape—that is, the whole of it on the western side. My experience in this district as a storekeeper and farmer, and other vocations, has led me to believe that we are suffering great hardships in this country for want of direct railway communication with the port of Auckland. Our freight from Auckland, from wharf to wharf or railway-station at Auckland to our wharf here, is something like £2 per ton on the highest rate, and about £1 7s. per ton on general merchandise, which is the lowest. We also have a freight of 11s. per ton over a portion of railway sixteen miles in extent. This practically is the only possible means we have to get trade direct from Auckland. Occasionally vessels coming from Auckland to take timber away make a point of trying to get freight, and to my knowledge they have never brought freight from Auckland under 10s. per ton: it is generally 12s., and sometimes 15s. We have also occasionally a cheap freight from the south, but that principally applies to produce, consisting of flour, grain, and chaff. It does not in any case apply to the ordinary necessities of life from the settlers' point of view. I refer to food and clothing. The freight from the south has never been less than 10s. per ton to this port, but that figure of 10s. per ton may be qualified in this respect: that everything is a ton so long as it is ten sacks. As a matter of fact, we are not getting a ton of anything for 10s. Speaking generally, I consider this district from end to end is paying 50 per cent. more freight than any part on the east coast for general merchandise. Even to Awanui freight is cheaper than to Dargaville. Speaking of the quality of the land from Dargaville upwards, my experience in Australia and in this country leads me to believe that the country in the Kaihu Valley is not only equal but superior to the bulk of the country in New Zealand, notwithstanding some tracts of rich volcanic soil. We have large tracts of country through the Kaihu Valley that is only fed at present by the Kaihu Railway, and I maintain that the connection of the Kaihu Railway with the direct Auckland railway service would prove of value to the land, and, moreover, would encourage settlement to a far greater extent than we can expect at the present time. I may say that we have a large tract of country which came into our possession three years ago by purchase from the Mitchelson brothers. We have something like 32,000 acres at present, and I may say that the whole block is subdivided into small sections. Southern people visiting our district inquiring for land have, without exception, condemned our facilities for transport, and have condemned the land for that very reason. They inquire first, "Where is your market?" and secondly, "How do you get there?" and that is as far as they go. A considerable amount of this land is west coast gum land that would not be suitable for grazing for some years to come, but for fruit-growing it is admirably adapted. The land adjoining our portion consists principally of Crown lands, and extends from the immediate neighbourhood of Dargaville right up to Tutamoe, and is a forest reserve: it practically extends right from the Bay of Islands to Punakitere. It is fringed by settlers on the lower end, and there are four settlements on the Kaihu-Taheke Road. These settlers are situated so far

from railway or any other communication at present that it costs them 4s. per hundredweight to get their flour to their sections from Kaihu. In the summer I believe it can be done for 3s. The whole of that country is bush land, and of first-class quality. There are tracts of sandy or gum country extending inwards from the west coast which could not be considered particularly good, but that applies to the whole of the north on both sides. The land is capable of producing, acre for acre, with any other ordinary land in the whole of the Dominion, but the facilities to bring goods in and produce out absolutely put it out of the question. Moreover, there is in the Waipoua Riding, or at the top end of the Kaihu Railway, within fourteen miles of the present terminus, a forest belonging to the Crown containing at a low estimate 300,000,000 ft. of marketable timber. That consists of kauri, kahikatea, rimu, matai, and other woods. There is only one possible way for it to go—down the Kaihu Valley Railway extension. The whole of that country is Crown property, and would make first-class settlement land if available for settlement. Taking into consideration my knowledge of the timber, and the rapid rate it is disappearing at, I contend this forest will be the only timber forest available for building purposes in Auckland in the very near future. The district from end to end, as far as I know, is suffering at present from want of railway communication, and Auckland is our only port. It is idle to think that any other port will be of any value to us, because all our trading connections and all our traffic practically lie with Auckland. The little we do with the south is practically limited to produce alone. I maintain the nearest possible connection with this district to Auckland should be the best one. To feed the western district it will be necessary for us to get a connection with the Trunk Railway at Kirikopuni. If our ultimate object is Russell as a port, probably Taita and Mangakahia would be the best. I know Opuā well, and consider there is no better port in the north, or better facilities for handling goods. The country adjoining Opuā, of course, does not lend itself to agricultural purposes, but the back country in all directions is good. I do not consider that the railway from Taita to Mangakahia, however, would be a practicable one. There are three distinct watersheds, and a railway across that country would necessitate extensive cuttings and tunnels. Moreover, I consider that in discussing that railway we are discussing something that may be of interest twenty years hence, when the Bay of Islands may be farther ahead. I would advocate the nearest possible connection with Dargaville and the Main Trunk, and also a distinct connection from the spot where we cut the western route with Whangarei. I maintain that the western route will supply the greatest want, for the reason that, taking it for granted that both waterways are of equal merit, our waterway does not give us a connection with Auckland, nor does it give us a connection in any way without transshipping on to the railway to Auckland. As a shipper, I would be inclined to pay more freight to-day if I could get direct connection with Auckland, because of the loss and delay incurred in transshipping. I know the country from Tokatoka to as far as the proposed western route, and I know that in the winter it is impossible for the people there to deliver any produce on the river except by pack-horse. Even if equal conditions prevailed, and the freight was 7s. 6d. per ton to both places, I still maintain that the western route would be the best, because the western roads are not available for settlers during nine months of the year. It must also be taken into consideration that Whangarei in the near future will produce an enormous amount of coal, and we are buyers of coal. We have a few outcrops of coal in this district, but we will not for many years to come supply sufficient to meet our own needs. I maintain that if the railway only came to the 27-mile limit, to pass Kirikopuni, it would serve this district, provided we get a connection from Dargaville to Kirikopuni. Moreover, it would find a market for the Whangarei people a hundred miles nearer home for coal. To serve the country as a whole, and give Dargaville and Whangarei a sort of T connection, I maintain that the railway from Kawakawa to Hokianga will serve a splendid lot of country. If the railway comes to Mangakahia great difficulties will be encountered, whereas if it does not go past Kirikopuni it will serve an admirable tract of country for many years to come, especially when it is remembered that the Whangarei-Hokianga line is to be constructed. The mere fact of a Railway Commission being set up to consider the merits of the two routes of railway places both routes on a level footing to start business on. It proves to me that the schemes on either side were nearly equal. Moreover, the routes from McCarroll's Gap to the southern portion of the Tangihua practically serve the same country, and probably a straight line there would serve the same purpose, providing there are no engineering difficulties. It is therefore only a question, so far as I can see, on which side of the Tangihua the line is to go. Whatever conditions prevail on the east coast they cannot possibly be so severe as prevail from Tokatoka to Okahu, otherwise settlement on the east coast would be retarded.

3. *Mr. Evans.*] You are very largely interested in the land yourself?—Yes.

4. Do you know that sometimes vessels coming back from Canterbury to the Kaipara take freights as low as 5s. per ton?—I have been in business here for many years, and have availed myself of all the cheap freights. I never heard of any freight from a southern port under 10s. a ton.

5. Do you believe the settlers in this vicinity, if the railway was constructed to-morrow, would all send their goods by rail?—I am quite satisfied they would.

6. It would be a very expensive business to construct a railway through this country: do you believe the railway would pay eventually?—I have no data, of course, but my opinion is that it would pay.

7. Have you any idea of the rate of interest the sixteen miles from Dargaville to Kaihu is paying?—It has been one of the best-paying lines in the country up to two years ago.

8. What is it paying now?—Just about working-expenses.

9. Is there any prospect of the other line paying better?—Yes. The Dargaville-Kaihu line is only a short one, and does not feed any extent of country.

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.

42. How could it be served by the Main Trunk line?—Through Whangarei, I suppose.
43. You do not suggest that the north should be left with the Whangarei connection?—Certainly not.
44. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Do you know that the Inspector of Mines has declared that there is coal right through this district?—Yes.
45. Do you not think it is probable that we shall have coal here, the same as on the other side?—I see no reason why we should not.
46. You have been asked a question with reference to railways paying: which railways pay best at the present time—those in the North Island or those in the South Island?—The North Island.
47. Have recent constructions of railways in the North Island been through districts superior to these, or have we a district as good as those through which railways have been constructed?—I am not very well acquainted with the lower part of the North Island Main Trunk Railway, but I maintain that this railway will go through better country than the Main Trunk does as far as Taumarunui.
48. There is no reason to suggest that a railway here, whether on the eastern or the western route, will be unpayable?—Not at all.
49. Is it not a fact that the extension of the Kaihu line will bring to the Crown increased royalties sufficient to make the whole extension?—I maintain that the increased royalties alone will make the railway-line right up to Hokianga.
50. That the cost of construction will be met by the increased royalties on timber?—Without a doubt.
51. You have given an estimate of 300,000,000 ft. of timber: is that excessive, or a moderate estimate?—It is not my own; it is Mr. James Maxwell's estimate, and he is one of the best timber experts in the north. He is in charge of the State forest at present, and knows every acre of the country.
52. What would be the effect of the extension of the Kaihu line on settlement in the north? How soon would that settlement affect the railway without the timber?—A matter of ten or twelve years, taking the present rate of expansion.
53. So that the freight on timber would continue to make the line payable until the settlement itself could maintain the line?—There can be no question about it.
54. Putting it in another way, the only way to make the Kaihu line pay, and pay well, is to extend it into the timber country?—That is so. It certainly would not pay if extended merely to induce settlement.
55. Can you remember how many years ago you heard it prophesied that the timber industry would soon be played out?—About thirteen years ago I was told that in a few years the timber would be finished; but, taking the rate of the destruction in the past, I think they had fair grounds for saying so, because there were vast areas burned every year, which is not the case now. I have known thousands of acres of first-class kauri to be burned for no reason at all—not even surface-sowing the land.
56. The timber industry has decreased somewhat, has it not?—In the immediate district I think it has decreased considerably during the last five or six years.
57. Taking into consideration the decrease of timber which lessened the output of the district, and at the same time the increased settlement and dairying, is our district any worse off because of the decrease in timber?—I think we are better off, because dependence was put on the bush work, but since the bush work has ceased people have concentrated more of their energies on the land, and they are making good headway.
58. In the future this country, by reason of the dairying and so on, will be a payable centre?—I think it will make it more payable than any other in New Zealand.
59. *Mr. Steadman.*] Is anything being done to replace the timber?—No.
60. Do you know how long the settlers inland from Tokatoka have been occupying their land?—I do not.
61. Do you think they have been occupying it as long as the settlers in Mareretu and Maungakarama?—I think longer.
62. Could you indicate by what road you would get your goods from Auckland when either of these Main Trunk sections are put in?—Until we have a railway connecting from Dargaville with either of the proposed lines there is no question that it will be necessary to get them from Auckland as at present, unless the freights from Auckland to Kirikopuni by rail, and from Kirikopuni to Dargaville, will be less than by the other way.
63. What is the distance from Kirikopuni to Dargaville by river?—It might be twenty-five to thirty miles.
64. The eastern route is sixteen miles from Dargaville and fourteen miles from Whangarei?—Yes.
65. And the western route is nineteen miles from Whangarei and eleven miles from Dargaville?—That is so, I think. Those are straight measurements.
66. *Mr. Becroft.*] What extent of country will those 300,000,000 ft. of timber be extended over?—I could not give the area.
67. Do you consider that the best way to feed the Kaihu extension would be to keep this land for timber purposes, or to open it for settlement?—I would not like to make an assertion. Both are important. We have timber to a certain extent, and we can keep it as a feeding-ground for the railway, and whenever the timber is removed open the land for settlement.
68. That is a slow process of settlement?—Yes, but it would not apply to all the routes of the line. There are great tracts of country not affected by the bush at all.

DARGAVILLE, MONDAY, 24TH APRIL, 1911.

JOSEPH WILLIAM SHANNON examined. (No. 30.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a Crown Lands Ranger for the Auckland Land District, and my headquarters are at Auckland.

2. Would you make a statement to the Commission bearing upon the matters we have under consideration?—I have lived all my life in the far north—the district that is to be benefited by the Main Trunk Railway, and I believe the railway should be pushed forward as fast as possible to its ultimate destination before branch lines are commenced; or, at any rate, that it should go so far as to serve the whole of the north. If the line was carried through as far as Mangamuka it would serve a large tract of fertile country to the north of Hokianga and Whangaroa, as main roads could be led to that junction. Of course, I have heard that it might stop for some years at Mangakahia or Kaikohe, but I would like to point out that if carried on from Mangakahia as far as Mangamuka Valley it would open up a large area. From Mangamuka the main road is now under construction to Whangaroa, which is deep water, and a very good harbour. There is also a formed road leading from Mangamuka through Fern Flat Settlement into Peria, where it strikes the middle road through the Oruru Valley and into Mangonui again at deep water. There is also a road under construction now from Mangamuka to Victoria Valley, over which the Commission have travelled by horseback, where there is a good metal road that leads right on to the port of Awanui, through Kaitaia. The present port is on the river, to which steamers of 100 tons get up a distance of seven miles. That road also connects with Mangatete, Waipapakauri, and farther north. Then there is a main road from Kaitaia to Ahipara, and then a road through to Herekino, which is increasing very rapidly as a dairying centre. The timber is now worked out, and the settlers are giving their attention to dairying, and have a factory going. There is also a butter-factory at Kaitaia and Oruru, and a cheese-factory near Awanui. The main metalled road from Victoria Valley to Kaitaia also taps the Takahue Valley and the Fairburn Settlement. Then, again, a road is being made from Broadwood through Te Karae Block to Mangamuka. The distance from Kaikohe to Mangamuka would be about thirty miles at the outside. This land that I have mentioned that is so opened up by roads and roads under construction is a very fertile district, and is now producing a large number of cattle, and in the future will produce a great number of sheep, because a lot of the land is broken, and perhaps more suited for sheep than dairying. At the same time there is a great future for dairying in that district, besides room for a million sheep on the broken land now under forest. I was at a small informal meeting of settlers in that district some months ago, and these railway matters came up and were discussed, and the question of which route would pay the north best was discussed—from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei, or the continuing of the Main Trunk line through the centre of the Island. It was agreed that probably with the connection to Whangarei the northern end would be pushed on quicker, but at the same time they were unanimous in saying that they approved of the Main Trunk being pushed right through, as it was of more benefit to the greater number of settlers, and the proper thing to do from a Dominion standpoint. That opinion I confirm personally, though I think the line might get through a little quicker the other way. My headquarters were in the north for seven years, and I know that many settlers throughout the Mangakahia and adjoining districts took up their land in the hope that the railway was coming some day, and that hope has kept many of the settlers on the land up to the present. All along the line there will be timber that can be got out by the railway that will never be touched otherwise. The settlers would be able to dispose of any trees they have, but contractors now do not care to go and work a small clump of timber, as it does not pay them to do so. If, however, there was a railway the settlers could get their few logs out to the line, and probably small sawmills would spring up along the route to supply the different localities with timber for the settlers' dwellings. In fact, I feel quite sure there will be many sawmills started along the line.

3. You advocate the pushing-on of the Main Trunk as against the branches?—Yes.

4. *Mr. Ronayne.*] By which route do you advocate the pushing-on of the Main Trunk?—I am not acquainted with the eastern or western route. I have not been along the actual lines.

5. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] I understand you to advocate the construction of the Trunk line from Kaikohe to Mangamuka, and that you are not favourable to the extension from Kaikohe to Horeke. What is the distance from Kaikohe to Horeke?—It may be twenty-five miles.

6. And to Mangamuka, thirty miles?—Yes.

7. And the construction of a line from Kaihohe to Horeke would not be on the line of the central route so much as a line from Kaikohe to Mangamuka?—That is so.

8. *The Chairman.*] Is there any possible way of getting to Mangamuka except by the Te Paka Block?—Yes; across from Kaikohe by Lake Omapere on the west side, and then going down the Waihou.

9. Where do you turn into Mangamuka?—Right across from Rangiahua.

10. Is not Rangiahua on the road to the Hokianga extension from Kaikohe?—Not that I am aware of.

11. Do you not know the surveyed route?—No.

12. Are you aware of this fact: that the surveyors in laying out the Hokianga Railway have as their objective Mangamuka?—Yes.

13. Very well, then: does not the route to Hokianga only mean a branch of two or three miles from the Main Trunk to deep water?—Taken that way, yes.

14. Do you not know this to be a fact: that in laying off the extension from Kaikohe northwards the engineers have as their objective Mangamuka?—I have understood the line is to go there.

15. And that at a certain point on that road a branch line of two or three miles is being put in to give immediate access to the Hokianga?—Yes.

16. Then, you agree that the extension from Kaikohe to Hokianga as laid off is not going to interfere with the further extension to Mangamuka?—No, it will not interfere with it, but the more direct route I spoke in favour of would open up Okaihau, and would have a level road in from Ohaeawai.

17. Do you not know that the engineers are endeavouring to ascertain the best line possible to Rangiahua?—Yes.

18. Whatever line they adopt will be just as good for those places you have mentioned as the line you are speaking of?—Yes, it must go by the best line.

DAN SAVIDENT examined. (No. 31.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am Harbourmaster of Kaipara Harbour. I reside at Te Kopuru. I have been five years Harbourmaster, and twenty-three years trading in and out of the harbour.

2. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Supposing a railway-bridge were placed over the Wairoa River at Kirikopuni, would it interfere with the steamer traffic?—At what height above high water would it have to be placed not to interfere with the traffic?—25 ft. to 30 ft. would be ample for the present navigation that is going up there.

3. And for the future?—For the future I cannot say, but large vessels will not be able to get up there. It will be only small vessels that will proceed as far as that, because the width of the river is not sufficient for large vessels.

4. *Mr. Coom.*] What tonnage do you call small vessels?—Vessels carrying say, 300 tons, not more, could get up there.

5. In reference to the bar at the harbour, what size of vessels come into the Wairoa?—The biggest vessel I have taken up the Wairoa was the "Waihora," of the Union Steamship Company, which carries 8,000 tons. The "Waihora," fully loaded, would not go up further than Beacon Point.

6. A vessel drawing 26 ft. could go to the Beacon Point?—Yes.

7. How far is that from Dargaville?—Twenty miles, or a little over.

8. It will be possible in the future to load vessels of 8,000 tons in the harbour?—Yes, but it will be regulated by the draught, of course. The draught of a vessel depends on her width.

9. With the increasing size of vessels there will be a corresponding increase in draught?—I do not think so. It is all according to what trade the vessel is built for.

10. Is there anything to prevent the development of a direct trade from the Kaipara homewards or to Australia in the future?—Not so far as the port is concerned, because we have got a fairly good depth of water on the bar; seeing that there are about 36 ft. of water on the bar. I may explain that the vessels would have to do the same as they do in other ports—they may have to wait outside for fine weather, as is the case in any bar harbour in the world.

11. Is the bar generally workable?—Small vessels may stay a day or two, but it would be a very rare occasion on which a large vessel would have to stay in the harbour because of the state of the bar. I have been on all sorts of sailing-ships coming in, but I have never seen the bar in such a state that the vessel could not get into the harbour. Some years ago a very large vessel was at the port, called the "Largo Law," and that vessel had to remain one day inside.

12. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Is it true that vessels trading to the Kaipara pay an increased insurance rate as compared with other ports?—I think they do whenever they cross the bar in any part of New Zealand, or almost any part of the world.

13. What is the maximum depth of water available for a vessel coming to the Dargaville wharf?—We take vessels drawing 18 ft. 6 in. to Dargaville.

14. *Mr. Steadman.*] What is the shallowest place in the river from Dargaville to Kirikopuni?—6 ft. 6 in. at low water.

15. Is it an extensive patch?—Yes, about a mile from Dargaville. I do not think you would find more than that at spring tides, and there is also a patch at Wallace, near Tangowahine, with same water.

16. What is the rise and fall of the tide?—We average it at 10 ft. We had one vessel loaded to 17 ft. at Tangowahine.

17. Do you know that in England they are building motor-lighters to compete with the railways?—I know that when I was trading along those parts they had lighters there that could carry as much as 1,500 tons.

THOMAS BASSETT examined. (No. 32.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am a farmer, and resident at Te Kopuru.

2. You know the scope of this Commission: would you like to make a statement as to the matters we are inquiring into?—I have been especially asked to give evidence as to how this matter will affect the dairying industry, which I am connected with, being chairman of the Northern Wairoa Dairy Company. I have been thirty-five years in the district. With regard to the railway route, my opinion is that the central route is the correct one. I do not pretend to know anything about the country, as I have not been over it, or beyond a line north of the northern junction of the two proposed routes. I omit from my statement any reference to the Bay of Islands County. There is a large tract of country between Kirikopuni and McCarroll's Gap—between the Tangihuas and the Wairoa—that cannot be utilized under present conditions for dairying, because it is impossible to get cream to the factory. If the line went through the Mangonui Valley it would

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.

ARTHUR JOHN STALLWORTHY examined. (No. 33.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You reside at Dargaville, and are a journalist?—Yes.

2. You are probably aware of the nature of this inquiry: would you like to make a statement to the Commission?—I know practically the whole of the country from McCarroll's Gap to the junction of the Mangakahia on the western side, and I have a very fair knowledge of a large portion of country on the eastern side over the same area. I believe it would be an accurate description to say that the bulk of the good land in that area lies to the west of the western route. The same remark applies to the country at the lower end on either side of McCarroll's Gap. It is perhaps more true of the country east and west of the Mangakahia. I would like to corroborate the evidence given in this respect by Mr. Edwin Harding, who stated that there would probably be served by the western route an area of about 1,000,000 acres, with a capacity of probably two sheep to the acre. I have seen large areas of maize growing on country that would be served by the western route growing to a uniform height of 12 ft. without one ounce of manure being put on the land; also very heavy yields of potatoes, turnips, oats, and pumpkins. As a Dominion enterprise, I believe that a railway along the western route would be a very sound business proposition, as it would promote settlement and development of a rich and very large area along that route. Much of our land is now held in blocks that it would be better to subdivide. A railway along the western route would assist in the subdivision of these estates. Thousands of head of cattle are now being driven to the rail-head, and more would go by rail if we had the railway. Then, again, if the railway were extended along the western route it would stimulate our farmers by giving them greater facilities for shipping fat lambs and stock to the city markets. I know from my own knowledge that as much as 2s. to 8s. per hundredweight has been paid for cartage over our roads to much of the country that would be affected by the railway along the western route. The railway would minimise all these charges, and greatly assist the settlers in developing the country. Much of the country that would be served by the western route is as badly roaded if not worse than any other part of the Dominion. Our local legislators are of opinion that it is an impossible task, from a finance point of view, for the local bodies to attempt to road much of the country tapped by the western route. At some of the points it would cost £1 per yard to put metal on the roads under present conditions, and frequently they have had to pay from 10s. to 15s. per yard for metal on roads. These remarks would apply to the Mangonui Valley—from McCarroll's Gap to the Tangihuas on the west. The Girls' High School Reserve would be served by this railway, and it has a magnificent future before it when brought within the reach of the line. At present it is very difficult to develop it, on account of the want of roads. The Omano Estate is a magnificent one, of great carrying-capacity, and if the western railway is extended the Government should acquire that land for closer settlement. We urge that the western route should be adopted, because it is a Main Trunk line, and therefore a matter for Dominion enterprise, as it would be constructed and brought into a paying condition sooner than any branch line. Also, the lands would be quicker brought under settlement. As to the possibility suggested by one Commissioner, of a steamer line on the Kaipara waters competing with the railway if it went west, I might say that in thirty years, the Kaipara Steamship Company, or its immediate predecessor, the Northern Union Steamship Company, paid only one dividend, and that suggests the inference of the extreme improbability of any line of vessels on the Kaipara waters competing with the railway, or of any lowering of the fares in order to bring the railway fares down also.

3. How much dividend did they pay?—2½ per cent; nothing last year. Almost immediately the railway was opened to Te Hana, and tapped the Otamatea waters and the traffic of that district, the old-established steamship company left the Otamatea because the trade fell away, which shows to my mind that it is impossible for the steamship service to compete with the railway along the western route. At present the freights on the east coast, at Mangapai and Whangarei, are reported to be from 5s. to 7s. 6d. per ton. There is no competition there, and it is probable that they would be reduced through the railway competition along the coast to the south of Whangarei. In my opinion, a line from McCarroll's Gap direct to Whangarei, and junctioning with the railway system north of Whangarei, would be a very bad business proposition, as it would go through country which would not return enough to pay for the upkeep of its own length of line. It would not be a sound business proposal to go from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei in a straight line through Mangapai and practically skirting the sea-coast all the way. Further, if the railway went from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei instead of by the western route it would be to link settlements north of Whangarei with Whangarei, and it would mean something like twenty-seven miles more of travelling for the people in those districts to get to the Auckland port of departure. This would be a serious prejudice to the railway as a trunk line. It would result in the traffic, both passengers and goods, instead of going past Whangarei, and so helping to maintain the line south of Whangarei to Auckland, going into Whangarei Port itself, and from there to Auckland by sea. If the line is extended along the western route it goes more through the centre of the Island; and from a defence point of view the country will be better protected, and an enemy will have less chance of interfering with the line. If it went into Whangarei, where it is close to the seaboard, it could be more readily interfered with. Further, I would say, in the locality of the Mangakahia district for every mile the line might go eastward it would come more or less into competition with the existing parallel line from Whangarei to Kawakawa.

4. What about the competition with the Kaihu line, on the other side?—I am not in a position to indorse the suggestion that the best connection for a Wairua branch line to connect with the Main Trunk would be to Kirikopuni, as a better connection might be found from Ruawai to Paparoa. That would not give Dargaville an immediate connection with the main line, but it would put the latter in this position: We have a splendid harbour, despite what some witnesses say, and we are probably the nearest point to Sydney. We do not know what the future may be, but it is possible that with a branch

line from the Main Trunk to Ruawai we could, so to speak, make the deep-sea trade shake hands with the arterial system at Ruawai, and thus develop a considerable inland trade for the railway. A branch line at Ruawai would be a great feeder to the main system, and would be a distributing line for a large extent of country.

5. *Mr. Evans.*] You say the only dividend paid by the Kaipara Steamship Company in thirty years was $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. ?—I believe that to be the fact; there is a director in the room at present to corroborate my statement.

6. Do most of the imports and exports of this district come and go by steamers at present by way of Kaipara ?—Timber goes by sea, and imports to a large extent from southern ports and Sydney come over the bar.

7. If the railway were put through by the western route, how long would it be before the country would be carrying sheep and cattle ?—I believe the development would be almost immediate, and most remarkable.

8. Are you aware that the Kaihu line at present is not paying ?—Yes; but I am also aware that if it were extended another four or five miles it would pay handsomely. The Kaihu line was one of the best-paying lines in the Dominion up to the last year or two.

9. Would it not be very expensive to continue that line beyond Kaihu ?—If the Government got 3d. per 100 ft. royalty for the timber at the head of that line it would pay for the construction of the additional length twice over.

10. *Mr. Coom.*] You suggested a branch line from Ruawai to the Main Trunk: what object would that serve ?—I am not suggesting that as an alternative to the western route, but as an alternative to the connection between Dargaville and Kirikopuni.

11. But it has no connection with Dargaville ?—It would connect with a ferry service from Dargaville.

12. Is not Dargaville connected with Kirikopuni by a steamer or ferry service now ?—Yes; but if we could connect it by railway at Ruawai it would be a much better service than the one we have now, as after getting to Ruawai we have now to travel over impossible roads to Te Hana to get to the railway. If we could get on the train at Raupo or Ruawai very little freight probably would go to Helensville.

13. Would not the same result be obtained by connecting with Kirikopuni ?—By the people above or near Dargaville, yes; below Dargaville, no. I do not think that people below Ruawai would go up to Kirikopuni.

14. What would the average length of the connection be from Ruawai ?—About seventeen miles.

15. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What is the steamer fare from Dargaville to Ruawai ?—3s. single.

16. What is the distance ?—Twenty-five miles, roughly.

17. Do you confirm the statement that it is twenty-five miles from Dargaville to Kirikopuni by water ?—About that, taking the tortuous channel of the river into account.

18. If people wanted to go to Auckland by the Main Trunk, and had the alternative of connecting with the line at Kirikopuni, how many miles would they be then on their way to Auckland ?—From Dargaville practically none. If they went from Dargaville to Ruawai they would be twenty miles or so on their journey.

19. What is the distance from Ruawai to Paparoa ?—I have ridden it easily in an hour and a half in summer, but in winter it takes five hours.

20. A coach connection from Ruawai to the Main Trunk would be about two hours and a half ?—Quite that; but the line is not proposed to go within three miles of Paparoa.

21. Is not the point at which you touch the main line south of McCarroll's Gap ?—Yes, by about five or six miles.

22. Taking the District Engineer's figures, Kirikopuni is 126 miles from Auckland, and persons going from Dargaville to Auckland would have to go twenty-five miles to Kirikopuni and 126 miles to Auckland: is that not so ?—Yes, 151 miles in all.

23. And from Ruawai, how many miles would it be across to the line ?—Not more than twenty.

24. *Mr. Steadman.*] There is very little difference between the two routes in length ?—That is so.

25. You advocate the western route as the Main Trunk route ?—Yes.

26. Can you give us any proof of your assumption that the eastern route is not a business proposition ?—I have stated my own opinion from personal observations.

27. You have made the statement, but can you give us any concrete facts to support it ?—I can give you many facts that lead up to my belief that this country will carry two sheep to the acre.

28. How do you arrive at it ?—By the extra quality and carrying-capacity of the land on the west as compared with that on the east.

29. You take the country within seven miles of the railway as your guide ?—No, the general nature of the whole country.

30. Do you go over to the Kaihu line in making your estimate ?—Yes.

31. Why do you not go over to the other side to the Whangarei line ?—Practically I do. I go right into the Hikurangi district, and, in my opinion, there is no comparison as regards the carrying-capacity of that country with the land on the western route.

32. Do you know what the Purua district is carrying now to the acre, between Ruatangata and the eastern line ?—No.

33. Have you ever been into that district ?—Yes, and into Whangarei.

34. Do you know Manoia's place there ?—No.

35. Do you know Knight's estate ?—Yes.

36. How many sheep does it carry?—I do not know.
37. You have no facts, then, to go on.—Yes.
38. Well, what are they regarding the eastern side? All you can say is that the western side is carrying two sheep to the acre. Is not that land in the western portion bush land and State forest?—Please name your point.
39. Take Te Karaka?—There is a lot of excellent country there, and a good deal is in grass carrying sheep and cattle.
40. How many to the acre?—I do not know.
41. You have no knowledge of facts beyond the bare assertion that one side is better than the other?—Yes; I have seen the cattle and sheep grazing on the slopes.
42. You cannot tell us what the country is carrying?—The census returns will tell you that.
43. Where does the bulk of the population lie in the northern part of that peninsula—between the central line and which coast?—I would refer you to the census just taken.
44. Will you not admit that it lies to the east of the western route?—I will not admit it.
45. As between Dargaville and Whangarei, where are the greatest number of people travelling?—I am not in a position to say, but taking the last few years you will find much more growth in the western district, and probably many more people have passed through Dargaville than through Whangarei. I believe our Post Office returns knock Whangarei out with regard to the respective amounts of money passing through.
46. I am asking you about the passenger traffic?—I should say that probably more people travelled through Dargaville than through Whangarei.
47. Notwithstanding the fact that people come from Kaikohe, Bay of Islands, and other places, and pass through Whangarei?—Notwithstanding that.
48. Is the Hobson County much more populous than the Whangarei County, Bay of Islands County, and Whangarei Borough?—There are many parts of our district more thickly populated than some parts you mention.
49. Is Hobson County more populous than Whangarei County?—On the figures on which the Marsden Hospital Board was constituted there is not much difference either way.
50. Is the population equal to that of the Bay of Islands and Whangarei combined?—Do you include Otamatea?
51. That is, south of McCarroll's Gap?—It is all tapped by the western route.
52. In what way?—If the line north of McCarroll's Gap is not going to produce sufficient revenue to make it pay, all the line south of McCarroll's Gap must be affected accordingly.
53. There are two lines, one starting at McCarroll's Gap and connecting at the Mangakahia, and the other at Maungakaramaea: do you say that the one section taken by the eastern route will not pay, while that going by the western route will?—I do not believe that the eastern route, south of Mangakahia, would pay.
54. Will the western section pay?—I believe it will pay handsomely. I believe it will pay its own interest and contribute to the interest on the southern length of line.
55. And although the eastern route touches some of the same country, you say it will not pay?—I do not think it will; on the other side there is a different class of country. The Tangihua Range would isolate it from the eastern route.
56. *The Chairman.*] Did I understand you to put forward the proposed branch line from Ruawai to Paparoa as an alternative suggestion, or in preference to the connection between Kirikopuni and Dargaville?—No; I did not like the Commission to go away with only one suggestion from this town regarding a connecting line—that from Dargaville to Kirikopuni. Future developments might show the advisability of having another connection, and I wanted to place the suggestion before the Commission, but not as a concrete proposal.
57. We have had three routes suggested, one to connect opposite Dargaville, another one to come out at Raupo, and a third one at Kirikopuni?—Yes.
58. I suppose you realize that in order to get over to this coast it would mean an enormously expensive bridge?—Yes.
59. And that goods would have to be taken down by the river to any of these points on the opposite side of the river, and there transhipped to the railway?—Yes.
60. That being so, do you not think that, once goods are on the water, it would be cheaper to take them right on by water to Helensville, and then put them on the train there, instead of transhipping them at any of the points you have mentioned?—That might possibly be the result.
61. Do you not think, seeing that the most favourable route or connection Dargaville gives them would be by Kirikopuni, which would mean a railway right into Dargaville, it would be better to take that course, and so obviate transhipment?—Possibly, yes. I do not want to discountenance the proposal to connect with Kirikopuni, which may be the most favourable route, but I have never considered the question in all its details.
62. *Mr. Becroft.*] You emphasize the possibility of Ruawai becoming a deep-sea port: are you aware that at Young's Point already provision is being made at great expense to take deep-sea ships?—Yes, but I do not know that vessels of a certain size can be berthed at Young's Point. I refer to larger vessels we would berth down at Ruawai.
63. Are you aware there is 26 ft. of water at Young's Point at low tide?—No.
64. Are you acquainted with the eastern route from McCarroll's Gap to the south-east corner of the Tangihuas?—No.
65. You are acquainted with the western route?—Yes.
66. Can you compare the two routes?—I have not been immediately north of Waikiekie.

SAM HEATH examined. (No. 34.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, residing at Tutamoe.
2. How far do you reside from the Mangakahia Valley?—Twenty-one miles, near the junction, at Paraheia, of the Mangakahia and Awaroa Rivers. I am living on the range that bounds the western part of the Mangakahia Valley. I have been resident there for fifteen years.
3. Will you make a statement to the Commission in reference to the matters we have under consideration?—I wish to indorse what Mr. Harding has said regarding the land between Pakotai and Kaikohe. The districts that would be served would be Opouteke, and along the Mangakahia to Waiotekumurau, Waimatanui, and towards Tutamoe. The class of country about Opouteke carries three sheep to the acre. At the lower end of the Mangakahia Valley the land would be about the same, and from Waimatanui the average would be about two sheep and a half to the acre. There are about thirteen hundred head of cattle and a thousand sheep in the Opouteke Valley, three thousand head of cattle, and about the same number of sheep in the Mangakahia Valley and up towards Tutamoe, and the natural outlet for most of this land would be the Main Trunk by way of Mangakahia to Kaikohe. Last year it cost the settlers at Waimatanui 8s. 6d. per hundredweight, and in some instances as much as 10s. per hundredweight, to get their goods from Kaihu. This road is much better this year. We have been retarded in getting the cream-cart round, because of the state of the roads. In course of time feeders of this Main Trunk will run through Tarawhati to Pakotai, and another feeder up the Waima River from Kaihu over the saddle of the Tutamoe, down to Waiotekumurau and Mangakahia to Paraheia, or from Kaihu up the Waima River, crossing a low saddle about three miles west of Tutamoe running along west to Taheke and Opanaki Road, tapping the Waipou Forest of 100,000 acres, on to Wekaweka, and through the Wekaweka Hill, out at the Native settlement at Taheke, and on to Kaikohe. The settlers are decidedly of opinion that the Main Trunk from Auckland to Kaikohe, through the Mangakahia Gorge, should be put through before any branch lines are made.
4. *Mr. Evans.*] How long does it take to clear land in your district?—You might get it clear in a year, but it might take longer. It took me a great many years to get my first clearing.
5. How long is it since you got your land clear?—I have had grass all along, but not the grass I have now. I got a burn the first year, and then I felled again, and had to wait a second year. I got no good burns until three years ago.
6. You were twelve years on the land before you got a really good burn?—That is so, and then it burned the bush on 200 acres that had never been felled. In fact, it cleared the bush better off the land that had not been cut than from the land on which it had been felled. We made the mistake of felling the bush. We should just have underscrubbed it and let the fire go through.
7. How many sheep and cattle to the acre can your land carry after fifteen years?—I have one hundred head of cattle and ten horses on my land now. I have 500 acres, of which 300 are in grass. It is not half-stocked.
8. What products do you send from your farm?—Butter. I milk twenty-three cows. I also send away young stock.
9. How many settlers are there in your district?—About fifty from Kaihu to Waimatanui.
10. What amount of land would they hold between them?—About 25,000 acres—an average of about 500 acres apiece.
11. Have many got their timber down?—There are big clearings at Waimatanui.
12. Are they as far advanced as you are?—Farther.
13. What is the value of the land in your district?—A section has just been sold six miles from me towards the railway-line. A man took it up, a 250-acre section, six years ago. He has got it all ring-fenced and in grass except about 50 acres of bush. Last year he wintered over one hundred head of cattle, and he sold beef in the spring. He was asking £5 10s. an acre for the land, but I do not think he quite got that. He appeared to be quite satisfied with his price.
14. *Mr. Coom.*] What had he spent upon it?—About £1,000, excluding first purchase of stock. He had four hundred and fifty pounds' worth of stock on it at time of sale.
15. An impression has got abroad that it takes something like fifteen or sixteen years before property in your district can be brought into use?—It can be brought into use in twelve months now. The land has been burned and all the heads of the trees have been burned.
16. When do you sow the grass-seed?—I sow in February.
17. How soon after a burn?—If I could get the seed I would sow the next day.
18. When would it be fit to carry stock?—We can put young stock on it in three or four months.
19. Within twelve months after felling the bush you can carry stock on the land?—Yes.
20. Not in fifteen years?—No.
21. Are there any means of breaking in the country except by burning?—Not that country.
22. Are there no means of breaking it in by cattle?—Most of the land I have got in grass is burned bush, and never had an axe or a slasher on it.
23. What do you estimate that it costs you to get that country into grass?—About £2 an acre.
24. Burning without underscrubbing is not general, I suppose?—Yes, it is now.
25. Will the scrub burn green?—Yes.
26. Then, you cannot have a big rainfall?—Not now.
27. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Have the settlers about your district any marketable timber on their properties?—Yes. The only way they can deal with that timber is to burn it. It pays better to grow grass than to keep the timber, because there is no way to get it out.
28. Have the settlers destroyed much timber?—I estimate, with regard to my own place, that if I could have got 6d. per 100 ft. I would have made £5 or £6 an acre from the timber alone.

29. That has all been destroyed?—Yes.
30. Is there still timber that will be destroyed if no railway connection is given?—Unless a railway connection is soon got, the Waipou Forest will go. There is a likelihood of fire running through the heads of the trees.
31. What makes you say so?—Fires have crept down about two miles towards the road to the Waipou Forest.
32. How do they start?—From various causes. You cannot prevent a spark coming from a distance. Sometimes, when it is very dry, the heads will start alight, and the cause is very hard to ascertain.
33. Unless the timber is cut it will be all burned?—Yes.
34. *Mr. Steadman.*] How far from Kaikohe do you live?—Fifteen miles.
35. How much do you pay for packing?—4s. per hundredweight my neighbours paid, but in Waimatanui last winter 8s. 6d. per hundredweight was paid.
36. How far is it from Kaihu?—From twenty-one to twenty-six miles.
37. How far are those people from the Main Trunk line?—About eleven miles.
38. The question whether the line should go by the western route or the eastern route does not affect the Opouteke settlers?—They reach the line after the junction is made by either route.
39. Is your land ploughable, or covered with dead trees?—It is not ploughable. There are about half a dozen trees to the acre.
40. *Mr. Becroft.*] After being fifteen years on your land you should be able to give some facts as to the quality of the land for root and grain production when it is in a ploughable condition?—It is better land than it looks for grass-growing.
41. You have not tried root or grain growing?—We have grown small patches of oats and potatoes. They will grow, but we have not cultivated them to any extent.
42. *Mr. Evans.*] Does the weather interfere with the saving of the oats?—The weather does interfere. That is the reason why we do not grow them.
43. *Mr. Coom.*] What does it cost to stump that land?—Some of it could be stumped for £8 to £10 an acre.

WOOLSEY ALLEN examined. (No. 35.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a sawmiller, residing at Dargaville, and I have been thirty years in the district.
2. Will you make a statement to the Commission?—Where the line is supposed to cross the Mangakahia on the eastern route there was a mill built on a hill, 30 ft. to 40 ft. above high-water mark. Last year the boiler of this mill, in two floods, was covered with water, and on two other occasions the flood came up amongst the timber, but not to the boiler, which would be 5 ft. or 6 ft. higher. The valley that the railway follows after that is affected by flood-waters for a considerable distance, and if the line were built along the sides of the hills, which are fairly steep, the land would slip a lot, and make it very expensive. As the line would continue up that valley there is very little timber left. I want to compare the western route with the other routes as far as timber and royalty and work for the line are concerned. If you start at Kirikopuni, you would get timber on the railway within one mile. When you get in four or five miles you would be tapping a kauri forest belonging to the Government, with 14,000,000 or 15,000,000 feet of timber, without considering the white-pine or totara. That timber, at present, is worth about 2s. per 100 ft. in royalty. If the railway went there it would be worth anything up to 5s. per 100 ft. as it stands. About 10,000,000 ft. of the Mitchelson Timber Company's kauri have yet to come out also, and it would come by the line. If the line does not go down that valley, and goes into the Mangakahia, the rimu, kahikatea, and totara will be destroyed. Then, taking the land on the eastern and that on the western route, I say that there is absolutely no comparison between the two for quality or value.
3. *Mr. Evans.*] You prefer the western route to the eastern?—Yes. I really think the western route will be more profitable and better than the eastern.
4. *Mr. Coom.*] How wide is the Mangakahia River at this place where you say that the boiler was flooded 30 ft. or 40 ft. above high-water mark?—Not more than 30 ft. or 40 ft.
5. Are the banks high on the other side?—No; only on one side.
6. What is the height of the low side?—About 15 ft. from high-water mark.
7. Where does the water go when it goes over the bank?—It goes away up the valley. You will see the driftwood well up on the side of the hill.
8. Do you suppose it will be possible to put the railway across the river on a 30 ft. span?—No; it is 30 ft. on the bottom, but it opens out.
9. Would a 40 ft. span do?—It would require a span of 50 ft. or 60 ft.
10. You say that the banks are liable to slip: is there any evidence of that?—There are slips along the valley.
11. *Mr. Steadman.*] Is not the land in that particular place supported by sandstone?—I never saw sandstone there. On the sides of the hills you can see a great number of slips.
12. Is it not all good sandstone country?—There are a good many slips. In parts of the country the timber is not long off.
13. How far below the Titoki Bridge is this?—Three or four miles, anyway.
14. Do you mean to imply that a 60 ft. span would bring the railway across on a level?—I am not an authority, but I know that the bank is higher on the one side than on the other.
15. Do you know what the level of the mill was above the creek?—I have a fair idea of the grades, and I reckon that at the very least from high water it was 40 ft. to the level of the mill.
16. You did not take it with a level?—No.

17. *The Chairman.*] How far would it be to Kirikopuni from this bush that would be tapped? What amount of line would require to be made from the Crown kauri bush to Kirikopuni?—About six miles would tap the first of the kauri, but you would pick up timber all the way from a mile beyond Kirikopuni.

18. How much farther up would you strike marketable timber?—All the way, but no kauri.

19. How far would you keep on the kauri?—I could not say definitely.

20. How far through the bush would the line run?—I could not say for certain.

21. Is there any shingle in the Mangakahia River?—Yes, in any quantity.

22. How far would that line have to go from Kirikopuni before it struck that shingle?—I could not say. I have been round the place, but I have not been through the valley.

23. Would it be more than ten miles?—Less than ten miles would strike the Mangakahia metal.

ALFRED ERNEST HARDING examined. (No. 36.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I reside at Mangawhare, and am a general farmer, and have other businesses on the Wairoa. I have been farming for thirty years on the Wairoa, and trading for about eleven years.

2. Would you make a statement to the Commission regarding the matters we have under consideration?—First of all, I would like to take the point of the Main Trunk line. I am satisfied it is the opinion of the great majority of the people in the north that the Trunk line should be completed as soon as possible right up to Awanui; and, furthermore, that that line should take as near the centre of the Island as possible, so as to open up as much of the undeveloped portions of the northern peninsula as can be done. I think it is a mistake until that line is well towards completion, to discuss the merits of the branch lines. Looking at it from a Dominion standpoint, and speaking as an expert land-user, I am satisfied that this Trunk line will pay the Dominion handsomely. By reason of the mildness of the climate here, and of the productiveness of the soil generally, I believe that the North Auckland peninsula will carry more population in proportion to its area than any other part of New Zealand. Owing to the want of communication, many industries here are very backward. For instance, this country is eminently suitable for growing lambs, particularly early lambs, on account of the climate. You can grow them all the year round; but whilst you have to ship this description of stock the industry cannot be carried on profitably. I myself on two occasions separated lambs from their mothers, and brought them to the point where the barge should have been, only to find that the barge had not arrived, and, of course, I had to turn the lambs out again as stores. The same thing applies to fruit-growing and other kindred industries. I am aware that it has been the opinion of a great many people in the south that a very large portion of the North Auckland peninsula was bad land. That is an absolute fallacy. In proportion to its area there is far less unusable land in North Auckland than there is in most other parts of New Zealand, because in the south there are many mountainous districts, such as the Southern Alps and the western fiord country, which for all time will not produce sheep or cattle. In this North Auckland peninsula I doubt very much if there are more than 50,000 acres which will not in time be brought into profitable occupation. I know a farm near Dargaville, on the eastern side of the river, consisting of 1,400 acres, not fully improved—no artificial feed grown—which winters 1,300 sheep and 300 head of cattle, and the wethers on this farm are sold off as fats, and the owner also sells a large number of fat cattle. That is not an extraordinary case, and I am simply quoting it to show that the carrying-capacity is equal to the average country in New Zealand. There may be exceptional flats, such as Waimate in South Canterbury and Hastings in Hawke's Bay, but we have favoured spots too. In the Wairoa Basin there are 150,000 acres of first-class flat land, and I would not be surprised if it went to 200,000 acres. I, myself, have carried ten sheep to the acre for twelve months on part of my place at Mangawhare, just to see what the land could do. They were in the same feed all the time, and they were all fat when I took them off. They were on surface-sown mixed English grasses. With regard to the line going east or west of the Tangihuas, I am of opinion that the western line would open up more good country and generally serve a larger area of fertile land than will be served if the eastern route is adopted. But I have always taken this attitude regarding these two routes: Find out which is the best line for the railway, and in the best interests of the Dominion, and adopt that one. With regard to Mr. Allen's evidence: supposing the railway were to be started at Kirikopuni, after going through four miles and a half of private land it would enter Government property. If the present route as surveyed by the flying survey were adopted it would touch the Mangakahia River at a shingle-pit about fourteen miles from Kirikopuni. It would pass through a Government bush containing about 70,000,000 ft. of timber, including 14,000,000 ft. of kauri, mentioned by Mr. Allen. If the Government sell the timber as it stands they will get 2s. for the kauri, but if they put the railway in from Kirikopuni they will get 6s. or 7s. probably in royalty, and if you estimate the difference between the royalty on the kauri, kahikatea, rimu, and totara, I am satisfied you could build ten miles of railway for nothing. They are now paying 8s. per hundred for kauri on the river-bank. The Government put up the kahikatea and rimu, and the best bid was 3d. per hundred. With the railway I think they would get 1s. 6d. I may say that I am now selling all kinds of timber to the sawmillers off my own property, so have a fair idea of what the timber should be worth.

3. *Mr. Ronayne.*] You say that the fruit industry is retarded through lack of railway communication. I suppose you are aware that in the South Island fruit is conveyed by road for as much as thirty to forty miles to the railway-station?—I dare say that is so.

4. *Mr. Coom.*] Take the royalty at 6s. on kauri and at 1s. 6d. for other timbers, that would amount to £84,000?—Yes.

5. You have no doubt noted the statement by the Hon. Mr. Millar, that the North Auckland Railway will not pay more than $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.?—Yes.

6. Has the railway so far passed through land likely to maintain a railway or not?—Up to Te Hana it passes through poorer land on the whole than it will until it gets to Awanui. The only place you could call good land is a little bit of flat at Helensville and a little bit at Kaipara Flats.

7. Then, in your opinion, even were the statement of the Minister correct—which I presume you deny—it would still be advisable to continue the railway, in order to make the other portion payable by the good country and the resources farther north?—Most decidedly. It is the through Trunk lines that pay best.

8. The quality of the land and the producing-power from McCarroll's Gap right away to Awanui would make the other portion of the line nearer to Auckland pay better?—Undoubtedly.

9. *Mr. Becroft.*] In your opinion, would this poor tract of country from Auckland to the Otamatea Bridge compare with the poor country between Pukekohe and the Waikato Basin?—It is better. Generally this country is better, with richer spots at intervals.

10. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Is it not a fact that the country opens out as you get on?—Yes.

11. *The Chairman.*] The population of the North Auckland peninsula is between sixty-five and seventy thousand is it not?—Yes.

12. What is the population of Auckland City?—101,000, estimated.

13. And the main part of the population is north of McCarroll's Gap, in the North Auckland peninsula?—Yes.

14. Do you think that the population at the two termini of the railway would justify completing the Main Trunk line?—I think it justifies it at present, without saying what is to be done in the future.

15. What is the state of the North Auckland peninsula from McCarroll's Gap as regards population?—It is only scratched.

16. And your opinion is that the North Auckland peninsula will carry a greater population per acre than any other part of the Dominion of New Zealand?—I think so.

NUKUTAWHITI, WEDNESDAY, 26TH APRIL, 1911.

HIRE MOKENA WHAREPAPA examined. (No. 37.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You desire to address the Commission?—I have a few words to say. We are anxious to have the railway through the centre of our land. A number of Natives were waiting to give evidence last week, but they had to go away. The line that we are anxious to get through here is the North Auckland Main Trunk. The Governor came through here some years ago, and he was asked to tell the Government to spend money in this district to have a road made, and the promise was given that that would be done. Three years after that they started the road. We are anxious to have the railway through here, because this is good land.

2. *Mr. Coom.*] Is all the land about here in the hands of the Natives?—All the land on the west belongs to the Government.

3. Are the Natives prepared to produce anything on their land?—Yes.

4. *Mr. Evans.*] How many acres of Native land are there in this district?—Between 8,000 and 10,000 acres.

5. What is the value per acre?—It is valued roughly at £1 to £2 per acre, unimproved.

6. Would you sell at that?—Yes.

7. *Mr. Ronayne.*] There are two routes, the eastern and western, coming from McCarroll's Gap towards Kaikohe, but they meet farther down the valley than this. You want the western route in preference to the eastern route: what is your reason for the preference?—The eastern and the western routes join farther down, but if it goes by the eastern route the line may be continued on to Whangarei, and it would be the next generation before it comes further north this way, and the name North Auckland Main Trunk Railway means the main one, and ought to go in the centre.

8. *The Chairman.*] How many owners are there in these 8,000 or 10,000 acres you speak of?—About a thousand.

9. What are the names of the blocks?—Mimitu, Mangakohatu, Aruarei, Parahaki, Opouteke, Ahiehekotoru, and Paraietane.

10. Are you in all these blocks?—Yes.

GEORGE RUDELL examined. (No. 38.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, residing at Pakotai, and have lived in the Mangakahia Valley for sixteen years. I think the line should go upon the western route, as opening up the best country. I know the country on both sides very well. The eastern side, generally speaking, contains poorer country than the other. All the good land is in the centre, where visitors never go near.

2. As far as your property is concerned, it is immaterial whether the line goes east or west?—That is so.

3. You are simply speaking in the interests of the Dominion when you say that the west side is the better?—Yes. Some of the best country is on the west of the Tangihua Mountains.

4. Do you advocate the pushing-on of the line?—Yes; right through to Kaikohe and Hokianga. I think the talk about an electric railway in the Mangakahia Valley is only a gag to tickle the Mangakahia Valley settlers. It would never pay.

5. What are your views in reference to the connection between the Main Trunk line, or McCarroll's Gap, and Whangarei on one side, and to the Wairoa on the other?—I think the Main Trunk should be put right through first. If they start putting in branch lines it will never get through here in our day.

6. *Mr. Becroft.*] Are you satisfied that it would be a good business proposition to push the railway through?—Yes.

7. Settlers will be induced to take up land when the railway comes?—There are thousands of acres lying idle because of the want of a railway. The trouble is that we cannot send anything away, and therefore have to confine ourselves to the raising of stock.

8. Is that land open for selection at the present time?—Part of it.

9. Why is it not taken up?—Because it is too far back, and no one will go in to it. I am the only white man with a family in the Upper Mangakahia Valley. In the lower Mangakahia Valley, some four miles nearer Whangarei, three small families have settled very recently.

10. If the railway is put through the country will advance very rapidly?—Yes. They are rushing the Native land now.

11. *Mr. Evans.*] Are there many large blocks held by syndicates?—No; it is pretty well all Crown land. There is one block of 12,000 acres held by Finlayson Brothers. That is the only one.

12. Have you any idea of the amount of Government land here?—I could not say.

13. Is the land open for sale?—Some of it; but some is not surveyed.

14. How is it held?—Under the optional system.

15. *Mr. Ronayne.*] What would you send over the railway when it is completed?—Timber, and produce of all kinds. We can grow fine wheat and oats in this country. Thirty years ago it grew fine wheat, but the growing of it was stopped by the Natives. I have seen good corn grown here myself. We can grow 10 tons of potatoes to the acre without manure on these flats.

16. Do you grow all the potatoes required for your own use here?—The Natives have got all the level flats; but after the blight came the storekeepers had to procure potatoes from the south.

17. Could you give us, approximately, the amount of good timber there is here?—About 50,000,000 ft., I should say.

18. What way will the timber go?—By rail to Auckland.

19. *Mr. Evans.*] Did I understand you to say that the Natives had all the flats?—Yes.

20. *The Chairman.*] There is a good market for timber in the Wairoa?—Yes.

21. If the railway were started for Kirikopuni, would this timber go out by the Wairoa?—I dare say part of it would.

22. It would be more likely to go there than be carried the whole road by rail to Auckland?—I do not think so. There is a better market for white-pine and rimu at Auckland than anywhere else.

23. *Mr. Steadman.*] Would it be milled here?—It would be sent out both milled and in bulk.

EDWARD JOHN MULHERN examined. (No. 39.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer at Mangakahia, where I have resided for about nineteen years. I am in favour of the proposed route *via* the western side of the Tangihuas, in contradistinction to the eastern route. By such a route we will have a line that will tap the most fertile land in this peninsula—the country that will carry the biggest population, and one that will be in every sense of the term a Main Trunk line, because it practically takes the centre of the country. We do not altogether depend upon our agricultural or pastoral products. We have vast timber-areas still untouched. We have minerals, copper phosphates, a large coal-seam near Avoca, about ten miles from Parakao, and I could not exactly state the number of industries that may be established in this valley by reason of the water-power available. We have the highest fall of water in the North Island in the Nukutawhiti Block, with a good flow of water. The fall is 410 ft. As regards the timber trade, I would not say that most of it will go to Auckland, because no doubt mills will be started at Kirikopuni, and perhaps local mills on the line, but I should say that the export trade will be to Auckland for many years to come.

2. How is this area of land adapted for dairying?—Very well indeed.

3. Would the line through here help dairying?—Yes. We have four or five hundred cows, and that number could be increased to four or five thousand in a very short time. In the Opouteke Valley there are 150,000 acres adapted for dairying; in fact, right through to the Awakino at Waimatanui, extending back to Taheke, there is also a great extent of dairying-country. There is anything up to 150,000 acres running into the Wairoa watershed. The hills all round here are admirably adapted for sheep, and as for flats, you can see them for yourselves. In my opinion, it is a matter of national importance to construct the line on the lines I have enunciated.

4. *Mr. Becroft.*] Have you any idea whether the eastern or the western route would provide the greater quantity of timber?—The western, without any doubt.

5. What would the proportion be?—Four to one. There are 300,000,000 ft. of untouched timber on the western route.

6. Are you satisfied that when that timber is cut out the agricultural and pastoral industries will so develop as to make this line a paying proposition?—Yes.

7. *Mr. Coom.*] How many acres to the cow would you want in the Opotiki and Awakino?—Three acres to the cow.

8. How many sheep will it carry?—Two and a half or three to the acre.

9. *Mr. Evans.*] How much land do you own here?—My brother and I have 2,500 acres.
10. *Mr. Steadman.*] How long have you had your land?—Five years.
11. Do you know that the lines will junction for this part of the district?—I knew that previously the eastern route was supposed to go through Mangakahia.
12. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Is it not a fact that timber from Kirikopuni would go down the western route?—That would go down to Wairoa. There is a lot of timber that would feed the west and not the eastern route.
13. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Do you know the country between here and Kaikohe?—Yes.
14. And to the north?—As far as Rawene.
15. Do you think the country to the west of Kaikohe would serve as a feeder of importance to the Main Trunk?—Certainly.
16. In the event of this line being constructed to Kaikohe, and thus giving a connecting-line with Opuā, would you not send your produce by Kaikohe and Opuā, and ship there?—That would depend on the facilities provided. In the course of time, no doubt, some trade would go there.
17. Are you in favour of a direct line from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei?—I am directly opposed to that.
18. And you consider that no connection should be made between the Kaihu line and the Main Trunk?—In course of time that will come about.
19. You do not consider it an urgent matter?—No. Two and a half to three hours will bring one to the Kaihu Railway-station now.
20. *The Chairman.*] If the line is on the western route there would be a market for timber at Kirikopuni, as well as at Auckland?—Yes.
21. If the line were constructed on the eastern route, where would be the only market?—Auckland, for the line would be a long way from navigable water.
22. Does kahikatea stand railage?—Yes.

GEORGE OSWALD DYSART examined. (No. 40.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are a storekeeper, residing at Nukutawhiti?—Yes. I have been in the district about four years.
2. Will you make a statement regarding the matters we are considering?—On the question of whether the western or the eastern route should be constructed, I am not prepared to give an opinion, as I have not been over the country. As far as I can see, without going into the question deeply, it makes no difference whether the line goes by the east or the west. In regard to connecting Whangarei with the Main Trunk line, I am in favour of that, because I think the increased revenue that would be derived from the line right up to Kaikohe would help in the prosecution of the line by that route.
3. Where do you suggest that the connection should be made?—The shortest way to get to Whangarei.
4. Do you suggest that that connection with Whangarei should be made before the Main Trunk is completed?—I suggest that they should do both at once.
5. Are you in favour of the connection with Whangarei being made from the Gap?—I am not prepared to express an opinion.
6. You do not mind where the connection is made?—I would like to see it made as soon as possible, because I recognize that it will be many years before the Main Trunk gets up here.
7. *Mr. Becroft.*] If the western line is adopted, and the railway-construction taken to Kirikopuni, and brought north here, would that meet the purpose you advocate as well as the eastern connection?—As far as I know, it would. I would like to see both lines, but we would get connection sooner by getting it through to Whangarei.
8. Your object in supporting the connection with Whangarei would be because of the quicker benefit?—Yes.
9. It would not be a permanent advantage?—I should think it would be permanent. I think one long line would be better than two bits of line. The money already expended from Whangarei to Kaikohe would make it pay better if it was connected with one long line. The State would then get the benefit, instead of the steamship companies.
10. *Mr. Coom.*] Supposing it was a question of making the Whangarei branch and making the Trunk line through to here?—I should say that the line should come this way if it was a question of making only one of the two lines.
11. *Mr. Evans.*] It would answer your purpose to have quick connection rather than to wait for a number of years for more direct connection?—Yes, unless it was a question of deciding on one only. I would sooner surrender any benefit I would derive from the Whangarei connection than vote against the railway coming up to here.
12. *Mr. Steadman.*] You wish a connection to be made from the best point on the line to the Whangarei-Kawakawa Section?—Yes.
13. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What benefit would the people here get by the Kaikohe-Whangarei connection?—I am a good deal about the country, and there are plenty of times when I could join a train from Kaikohe and go direct to Auckland if there were a connection.
14. How far are you from Kaikohe?—Twenty-one miles.
15. And from Whangarei?—Thirty-four miles.
16. Do you get your goods from Whangarei?—Yes.
17. Are you aware that the central people prefer the western route?—No; I have not had time to go into the matter thoroughly. It does not affect us up here. We want the line brought this way as soon as possible.

18. It is twenty-seven miles between Whangarei and the central route. If twenty-seven miles were added to the Main Trunk line from McCarroll's Gap it would bring the line two miles on this side of Kirikopuni?—What is wrong with having two lines? There is do doubt that a line farther would pay.

19. Do you not know that no moneys earned by railways are ever spent in making railways?—I was not aware of it. I believe that the railways in the north pay.

20. How near would you be to the railway if that railway were made to two miles beyond Kirikopuni, given that you had a good road?—About sixteen miles.

21. If the railway were made twenty-seven miles along the western route, it would bring you within sixteen miles of the rail-head: would that not suit you better than a connection with Whangarei?—I do not know. As I said before, I am in favour of both lines being pushed on as soon as possible.

22. If the line were made to Whangarei you would still be thirty-four miles from the railway?—Yes.

23. Whereas if the same distance were made along the western route you would be within sixteen miles of the railway?—Even if we were within sixteen miles of the railway, it would be no benefit to me, because of the roads. Even when the railway is up here, as far as goods are concerned, I do not know that the railway will be much advantage. I think the water carriage to Whangarei and by road out here for heavy goods would be of more advantage than the railway. I paid £5 10s. per ton last winter for cartage.

24. What is the cartage rate during the summer months?—£3 10s. a ton when the load is only one way, and £3 a ton when there is a load each way.

25. Do you not think that you would get a cheaper rate to the rail-head at Kirikopuni?—I could not state whether it would be cheaper or not. With a good road the trip could be done in a few hours, but with bad roads it is quite different. I could not get it done now for £6 a ton.

26. Will you compare the state of the roads now with what it was five years ago?—They are very much better all over the north, particularly during the last eighteen months.

27. Is it not a fact that two years ago you had no road to Kirikopuni?—Not a vehicle road, from Holster's.

28. In another four years—by the time the railway gets to Kirikopuni—you would have a good road?—Probably, but that would be of no use to get to Kirikopuni. It would not be the shortest route.

29. Do you imagine the Government would push on both lines as fast as they would one line?—I imagine they could do it, but I do not suppose they would. It is a question of money.

30. *Mr. Ronayne.*] If it took four years to build the railway from McCarroll's Gap to Nukutawhiti, and two years to build the line from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei, which do you consider would be the better course to follow—to build the line to this point, or to build the line between the Gap and Whangarei?—For myself, I suppose I would sooner that it came up here, but I do not believe it would be so much for the good of the population. I think the railway should go where the bulk of the population is.

31. *The Chairman.*] You know that £100,000 per annum is being voted for the Main Trunk line. The average cost of construction is about £6,000 a mile, and the expenditure of £100,000 is equivalent to seventeen miles per annum: that would mean that in about four or five years' time the railway would be here, and in six years it would be through to Kaikohe: if both routes were to be sent on together—and I conclude that that would also mean the connection from Kirikopuni to the Dargaville-Kaihu line—you would not admit that, if you had the connection with Whangarei, I suppose?—If it would pay, I would admit that. Dargaville is as entitled to a connection as Whangarei.

32. Do you think, as a business proposition, that if the line is sent in from the Gap to Whangarei, the Main Trunk line will be made through Mangakahia in the near future?—Not so far as the population is concerned. The only chance would be by reason of the fact that the Government owns so much land there.

33. *Mr. Coom.*] Do you think the country between here and McCarroll's Gap would support a large population?—Round about here it would, particularly from Pakatoa upwards, and on the flats there.

34. What is the nature of the land between here and Kaikohe?—It is good land.

35. You know that Whangarei is connected with Auckland by sea, and you think it is more important to give Whangarei another connection by land rather than open up this country?—Because they have been endowed by nature is no reason why they should be denied a railway connection.

36. You think that a small population like that of Whangarei would support a railway in addition to the sea traffic?—You have the extra revenue to be got from the country in between.

37. Do you think the railway would increase the price of the land? Would it put £1 an acre on it?—I do not know that it would.

PARAKAO, WEDNESDAY, 26TH APRIL, 1911.

ANDREW HUGH MURRAY examined. (No. 41.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—I am a farmer, residing at Opouteke, and have been there eight years.

2. What do you wish to say?—I favour the western route.

3. What class of land does that route go through?—Mostly good grazing-country.

4. What is the nature of the land in the Opouteke Valley?—Very rich. I have grown grapes in the open, also strawberries and most kinds of vegetables. The land will grow good apples.

5. How far back does the Opouteke Valley run from Mangakahia Valley?—Nearly twenty miles of country with branch valleys, all good land, and running north and west.

6. What are you carrying on your farm?—I am grazing cattle, and growing cocksfoot-seed for sale.
7. Do you know the land on the eastern route?—Only in the distance. The parts I have seen are not to be compared with the west.
8. *Mr. Evans.*] How many bushels to the acre of cocksfoot can you grow?—I have never saved it all, but have sold perhaps 100 bushels off 20 acres.
9. How long did it take you to clear 20 acres?—I have 120 acres cleared, and it took me five years to get it into grass.
10. Have you tried any other crop?—*Paspalum* for grass-seed, but I have not saved it.
11. *Mr. Coom.*] What area do you hold?—186 acres; 120 acres are cleared, the rest in timber.
12. How long after felling the bush does it take you to get the land in grass?—About the second year. It is dry country, and we have no difficulty in getting burns.
13. What will it carry under grass?—One dairy cow to 3 acres; two sheep and a quarter to the acre.
14. Have you any experience of land in other parts of the Dominion?—I farmed at Aramoho, at Wanganui, for twelve years, and some of this land is equal to the Wanganui land, with a much better climate. I know the Province of Wellington well. The best land is in Wanganui, and we have not got the same mixture of soil here. Comparing the two districts, I should say the land here would compare with Wanganui in this way: 3 acres of Wanganui land would be equal to 4 acres here.
15. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Do you think it would pay the Government to rail this country?—Certainly, because dairy and bacon factories would be established in such places as the Opokeno; while fruit and maize growing would be largely developed, if there were a market.
16. Would the population increase?—I think this valley, without any trouble, would carry ten thousand people; but the Natives have got the best portion, where the towns and places for factories should be.
17. Are any of the Maoris here industrious?—Yes; they are starting milking, and some have ten and fifteen cows. One Native has twenty-eight cows, and is going to increase it to a hundred next season.
18. Do you remember the country north of Wanganui when it had no railway?—Yes.
19. Was that country then any more likely to pay for a railway than this district?—No. Settlement there has increased with the railway, and the prospects are just as good here.
20. *Mr. Becroft.*] Have you observed the effect of climate on the agricultural industry here?—I have experimented in the growing of wheat, oats, and barley, and the results have been very satisfactory. If the land here could have a ton of lime per acre it would grow all kinds of cereals. It would have to be manured; but, of course, other parts are rich enough to grow anything.
21. Can you say why so many tons of foodstuff or vegetables are imported into this valley?—People have neglected to plant them because there is no market.
22. Is it not because there has been other work more profitable for the working-men to follow?—Men will go where work is plentiful and wages good, and some do not realize what the land will produce.
23. *Mr. Steadman.*] If the Natives are working their lands, what is to prevent other men doing the same?—They have not the inducement, and the land is not theirs.
24. You are referring to Native land?—Yes. Perhaps a hundred people own this block, and if some of them put up a stockyard, their relatives would claim it. If another man sowed an acre of grass, some of his relatives might turn five or six horses into it, and so nothing is done.
25. Do you know what it would cost to individualize the title to this land?—No.
26. Do you think it would run into over £2 per head for costs?—I think it would; but it would pay where the land is worth £10 per acre.
27. Do you know what some of that land you refer to is sold for?—£2 5s. an acre; and when the railway comes along it will put £8 an acre on to it.
28. Do you not think it would be a good thing for the Government to acquire that land?—Yes.
29. Would you be surprised to hear that a Native who is interested in this land, sooner than go to the trouble of putting it through the Native Land Court, would rather take his chance at the ballot for Crown land?—I have heard that.
30. How far have you gone over the routes?—Not a great distance, only to the settlements below Titoki.
31. Do you know there is very little difference between the eastern and western routes in this valley?—Where the western route should go there is a great outlet for the railway to deep water on the Kaipara Bay. Starting from a point on the west side of the Tangihua Range it would run in nearly a straight line—with some large curves—to Kaikohe. There are possible sites for large towns over the whole route, and where good roads could be run to tap the railway system.
32. Where would the trade go to?—Auckland or Wellington. Early fruit and potatoes would be sent through. At present I have to go thirty-five miles to Dargaville or Whangarei to get my horses shod.
33. *Mr. Evans.*] How many settlers have made their homes in this district?—Thirty thousand acres have been cut up and sold in sections, and the people are on them.
34. If maize could be sent by rail from here to Auckland for 10s. per ton, would that induce the settlers or Maoris to grow it?—Yes, I would grow some myself.
35. Taking into consideration the milder climate, would you not say that the land here is as productive as the land in Wanganui?—Very nearly; there is a slight margin in favour of Wanganui.
36. What is the extent of the good land here?—It is where the line will enter the main valley, and there are 2,000,000 acres of it at the very least.
37. *Mr. Becroft.*] Are there any indications of coal in this valley?—I have seen several indications of it.

ALEXANDER POLLOCK examined. (No. 42.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—Parakao. I am a farmer.
2. Do you wish to make a statement about the railway-route question?—I am well acquainted with the country between Kaikohe and Auckland, with the exception of one portion near McCarroll's Gap. I favour the western route, because it is more central and would open up better country. On the eastern side a great deal of the land is very poor. After you leave Maungakaramea, miles of it would not feed a rabbit.
3. *Mr. Evans.*] Is there not some poor gum land on the route you advocate?—Only a few acres.
4. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Is there not some good land on the eastern route?—Not much after leaving Maungakaramea. I understood the eastern route was the one to Whangarei.
5. It has nothing to do with it. Are you aware of any good land between McCarroll's Gap and the junction of the two routes?—It is good land all through there.
6. Is there double the amount of good land on the western route?—I think there is.
7. Are you in favour of the shorter route between McCarroll's Gap and Kaikohe?—I am in favour of the route on the western side of the Tangihua Range.
8. What would be sent from this part of the country if the railway were completed by the route you suggest?—Produce of all kinds and timber. One bush has 30,000,000 ft. of kauri in it and 100,000,000 ft. of timber of all kinds. The line runs through it.
9. What port would that timber go to by railway?—Auckland.
10. Would it not go to Kirikopuni?—It should go there, but it is a good way inland, and a railway-line would have to be put in to Kirikopuni.
11. Would the railway get the timber that is now driven down the creeks?—It could be taken out by railway then.
12. Would it not be cheaper to drive the timber down the creeks than to carry it by rail?—In certain places it would.
13. *Mr. Coom.*] Do you consider when the timber is cut off this land the country ceases to be of any further value?—It is good for other purposes. Other produce will render the line payable.
14. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] If the timber could be as easily taken out by water as by railway, would it not have been taken out long ago?—It is Crown timber, and it has not been offered for sale.
15. Why not?—Part of this bush has been worked out on the other watershed of Kirikopuni.
16. Is there not a tram-line in there?—The Mitchelson Timber Company started to put in a tram-line, but abandoned it.
17. Why?—It was a bluff to make the people believe they had the timber when they never had it. They tried to get the license taken off the creek to prevent other people floating timber out, but they did not get a stick of timber.
18. Do you know the country south of the Tangihua Range?—Yes.
19. Standing at the southern end of that range, which side would be the best country?—It is good land, both east and west at that point.
20. Do you know the Waipu district and the Waipu Range?—No.
21. *Mr. Becroft.*] Is there not a great loss of timber by the present way of floating it to the mills by water?—Yes, millions of feet of timber have been sunk in the river. Some timber will not float, but kauri will.
22. Would not all timber be sent by the owners by rail rather than run that risk?—Yes.
23. *Mr. Steadman.*] You spoke in an airy way of 30,000,000 ft. of kauri being in this valley, where is the place?—Not three miles from here—between here and Holster's; the proposed railway-line goes through it.
24. You know the kauri workings?—Yes.
25. How many old workings are there in this district which have been taken up for agriculture?—Mostly all of them.
26. How long is it since they were cleared of kauri?—About four or five years.
27. You say the Mitchelson Timber Company did not buy that timber?—No.
28. What authority have you for saying that?—It has never been advertised or offered for sale.
29. Will you swear that they have not bought that timber and put in this line, and that the whole business has been stopped because the company has gone into liquidation?—I cannot swear that they have never bought the timber.
30. Why do you say that it is only a bluff?—I have been told so.
31. Who by?—I was told by the bush contractors when they were about finishing the other job up here that they were likely to get this contract, which was going to be offered. They said the Mitchelson Company was almost sure to get the bush.
32. You say they have not bought it: what is your authority?—That is what I have heard.
33. Please tell me your authority?—It was Browns who told me, some of the contractors.
34. Before you came into this room, did you know the difference between the two routes?—Yes.
35. Did you know the difference between the one line going direct to Mangakahia and the other from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei?—I understood that was what the dispute was about.
36. You did not know anything about this difference between the two lines?—Not until to-night.
37. On what did you form your opinion, then, after coming into this room to-night?—I was always in favour of the central route, because it was more central.
38. How much more does it lie towards the centre of the Island than the eastern one?—A good deal, but I do not know how much.

ALFRED HILL examined. (No. 43.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I reside in the Mangakahia Valley. I am a farmer, and have been five years here.

2. Would you like to make a statement to the Commission regarding the matter we are inquiring into?—I know the country fairly well up this valley, and from Maungakaramea down to Kirikopuni. I am in favour of the Main Trunk line being pushed on by the western route, on the Tangihuas. I know the country from Kaikohe down to the Tangihua Range.

3. What are your reasons in favour of the western route?—It is a little shorter, and the country is a little better there.

4. Between Kirikopuni and here, what is the class of country?—Very good grazing-country, and in several places capable of growing any kind of agricultural produce.

5. What class of country is it on the eastern route?—Some is very good, as good as any on the western route; but I think the latter is the best.

6. How many acres have you?—500 acres. I run sheep and cattle, and the land carries two sheep and a half to the acre.

7. What is your opinion about making a branch line to Whangarei?—I do not think it would pay, because the last eight or ten miles before getting to Whangarei is rather poor country. A lot of the country it would go through before reaching Whangarei lies handy to the Mangapai wharf, which would interfere with the prospects of the line.

8. *Mr. Evans.*] What did your land cost you?—£1 2s. per acre, from the Crown. It was bush land.

9. What do you value it at when cleared?—£5 per acre.

10. *Mr. Coom.*] In addition to the two sheep and a half to the acre, can you carry any cattle?—I would not like to say.

11. Is it not usual to carry a certain number of cattle with the sheep in order to keep the country clear?—Some farmers do.

12. How many cattle per 100 acres, running them with sheep, would you require for that purpose?—I might carry fifty cattle on my place when it is cleared in addition to the sheep.

13. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What effect would a railway passing your door have upon your land?—It would double my profit on my produce.

14. If you had a railway handy, would you still run sheep or cattle?—Yes, and do a little agriculture.

15. Would you grow maize?—Yes.

16. Have you had any experience in growing maize?—Yes, down near the Tangihuas.

17. What do you think of the proposal to serve this district by an electric line running into Whangarei? Would you like to wait for that time instead of for the railway connection?—No.

18. How long do you think it would be before that electric line was instituted?—A good while.

19. Then you do not think it is a fair proposition to have a main line of railway running through Whangarei, and connect this district with it by an electric line?—No.

20. Do you think a central line through this district, giving a connection with Auckland, would pay the Dominion better than running a line from Whangarei?—I think so.

21. *Mr. Becroft.*] What do you think your land would be worth after the railway went through?—Double what it is worth when cleared. I estimate its value cleared at £5 per acre.

22. Would not that mean doubling the rates to be obtained for the maintenance of the roads?—Yes.

23. Therefore, the railway would be an incentive for the making of good roads as well as quick communication with Auckland?—Yes.

24. Have you had any experience in farming in other districts?—Not south of the Tangihuas.

25. *Mr. Steadman.*] Do you know the configuration of the country to the east and west of this main road?—Only a very little south of Maungakaramea.

26. Do you know where the bulk of the population lies?—I could not say.

27. How are the people who live at Otongo and all those places on the east coast going to get to Auckland by the Main Trunk?—I do not know that part of the country.

28. Do you not think they have a claim on the central route?—I do not think they would be better served if it went east or west.

29. Do you not know that people like to take the railway-line in preference to a sea-voyage?—Yes, but I do not think one line would have any great advantage over the other as regards the distance to travel.

30. Do you know how far the people living round the part I speak of would have to go to get a connection with the western route?—I do not.

31. I think you favoured the western route as being the shortest?—Yes.

32. If the eastern route turned out the shortest, would you favour that?—I think the western is shorter. I also consider the better land is on the west.

33. On which side is the largest unimproved value in regard to land?—On the western, I think.

34. Have you no facts to back your assertion up?—I do not know the country very well south of the Tangihuas.

35. Apparently you have no facts to support your statements in regard to the northern land?—No; but in my opinion the western route goes through richer flats than the eastern one.

36. Do not the routes go through some of the Mangakahia flats?—Just here they do.

37. Do they not follow the course of the river?—Yes, until you get very near to Tangiteroria.

38. Where is the best country about the Tangihuas?—There is some good country there.

39. Is not the land on the other side of the same class?—Pretty nearly.

TITOKI, THURSDAY, 27TH APRIL, 1911.

EBER BALDWIN examined. (No. 44.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, residing at Kirikopuni, and hold 500 acres of land.

2. Will you make a statement to the Commission regarding the matters we are inquiring into?—I think the matter has been very comprehensively discussed by witnesses in other places, and I do not think I can add much to the evidence that has already been given. It appears to me, from my own point of view, that the Main Trunk line should take the most central route possible, to give the most benefit to the greatest number of people. I think the western route answers that purpose. From a settlement point of view, I am sure that the Whangarei side has the best of it at the present time; but I think that in a very short time—say, anything from five to eight years—the western side will outnumber the eastern side considerably, particularly if the western route is put through at a fairly early date. My main reason for saying that is that I think the country tapped by the western route, as laid out by the present survey, is without question the best land in the province north of Auckland, taking it as a whole. I would also like to mention the question of freights. It is a serious question in the western district. We pay from £1 10s. to £1 15s., and sometimes as high as £2 per ton to deliver goods to Kirikopuni. Compare that with the eastern freights, and I believe I am correct in saying that the freight by water from Whangarei to Auckland is about 5s. to 8s. 6d. per ton, and for delivering by road twenty-two miles inland from Whangarei Port 1s. to 2s. per hundredweight. On the western side I pay for packing, one to three miles, 1s. to 5s. per hundredweight. What it would cost to take it twenty miles at that rate I cannot say. I have paid as much as 1s. per hundredweight for half a mile. I think there is only one remedy to get over these things, and that is direct trade through to Auckland. I think, also, that by having the western route it means a tremendous lot for the northern district, and probably a good deal for the eastern, too, in the way of roads. It is impossible to make roads under the present conditions. It costs too much. I know that metal has cost up to £1 5s. per yard to road one piece of land within four miles of Dargaville. The only way to overcome this is to have some easy means to transport the metal, and so far as I can see the easiest means would be by railway. Then, with regard to the question of timber and the settlement of land after the timber is off, I would like to say that we have undoubtedly the largest extent of timber in the north of Auckland. There is only one means of working it reasonably, and that is by the railway.

3. *Mr. Romayne.*] Does that refer to the east or to the west?—To the western route distinctly, in my opinion. I happen to be dealing in timber very largely myself, and know something about the cost of transport by the different methods, and I think there are many millions of feet of timber in the north that cannot be transported by any other means than by the railway. I cannot put a correct estimate upon it, but I should imagine that between Wairoa and the Hokianga River there are 600,000,000 ft. of exportable millable timber. I think the majority of that land, when the timber is cleared off it, is of the best quality for settlement. I think I can substantiate Mr. Harding's estimate of that area as being about 1,000,000 acres. I have travelled through it by every possible route from here to the Bay of Islands. It is good agricultural land and good grazing-country. When I say agricultural land, I think it must have a good deal done to it before it is fit for agriculture. We must have means of transporting our stuff to Auckland, which is our market for small quantities. We must have small settlers to make the country do, and I think the smaller the area the land is cut up into the better. I might mention that I think, with due regard to Mr. Wilson in surveying the route, that there is room for a shortening of the distance. I know the country as well as any man in the north, and I think there are possibilities of shortening the route and saving one tunnel at least.

4. You say you want a direct line of communication with Auckland, so as to enable you to get cheap freights?—I think we must be able to ship in small quantities, otherwise we have to hold large sections, and I do not think that is a good thing for the country. The small settler cannot, on account of the present freight, ship to Auckland.

5. What will the small settlers send to Auckland by rail?—I think all the small settler produces. He will probably send a good deal in the way of fat stock and probably a good deal of small agricultural produce—potatoes and especially maize. We have here the best maize country outside of Opotiki in New Zealand.

6. Would that 600,000,000 ft. of timber all go through to Auckland?—In dealing with timber it strikes me it will be milled on the ground and exported straight to Auckland on the trucks.

7. Is it not possible to ship a good deal of kahikatea to Australia *via* Wairoa?—It is quite possible to ship it there if it suited the trade better, but I think it will be milled on the ground.

8. Is there no possibility of water carriage interfering—these goods being railed from Auckland to Onehunga and shipped from there to Kirikopuni, and then railed out to the settlers?—In my opinion, the railway will compete with the river in shipping timber or general freights as at present. There is a large transshipment. I do not see how they can reduce their freight from £2 per ton to compete with the railway rates.

9. I notice in travelling through the country that the creeks are largely used for driving timber to the Wairoa: would that be continued?—That is the very point we want to avoid. We are leaving a third of the good timber by not being able to float it down.

10. Why?—It cannot be put into the rivers. We take out the millable timber that will float, and leave the rest, and it is burnt. One of the main features in handling timber is being able to put it on the market straight away.

11. These 600,000,000 ft. of timber that you speak of extend from Wairoa to Hokianga: where will the timber in the Hokianga direction go—by rail or to Hokianga Harbour to be shipped?—In my opinion, it will probably go by rail to Hokianga, and be shipped there—that is, the portion in the Hokianga watershed.

12. Are there no waterways for that timber?—There are many that will not float. In the Hokianga district, rimu, for instance, where there is any distance, say, up to twenty miles, you can calculate on a 20-per-cent. loss by sending it into the creeks. Then you have matai and teraire—they are going to be milled before very long.

13. *Mr. Evans.*] What is the freight by scow from Auckland to Kirikopuni?—About 10s. a ton, and sometimes it runs to 15s. a ton from Onehunga. We also have vessels trading from the south which give us a freight of 10s. or 15s. a ton—that is, return freight in timber-boats.

14. You are getting most of your goods by these scows?—We do not get our goods direct from Auckland, but from the man on the river, and my experience is that we are paying the full steamer rate all the time.

15. You can get freight from the South Island at 10s. per ton?—Most of our goods come from Auckland.

16. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] We had it in evidence that you control 14,000,000 ft. of timber?—Yes, I hold approximately about 14,000,000 ft. in the Kirikopuni. It is mixed timber, but the bulk is kahikatea and rimu and kauri, with a good deal of totara.

17. Have you been bush contracting a good deal?—I am not contracting. I am handling and working the timber as my own property.

18. How did you gain your knowledge of the north?—I was born in the Bay of Islands. I worked there at farming for a matter of twenty-two years, and then I took to the bush, and I might say I have done pretty well out of the bush. But I think a man might do very much better on the river if we could get labour at a little less price. I am not saying that the labour is higher than it should be, because it costs so much to live, but if we could get goods into our district cheaper I think we could work a good deal cheaper too.

19. Do you know anything of the country south of Tangiteroria?—I have been as far south as Paparoa and Maungaturoto. I may say there is no comparison between the eastern and western routes concerning the Tangihua deviation. I think the country itself is argument enough.

20. Do you know the point where the main line diverges east and west?—I know where it strikes the Mangonui.

21. Do you know Waikiekie?—I have been through the district several times, but I do not know it well.

22. Where would you locate the border of the good land as compared with the bad land going across the peninsula south of Tangiteroria?—It is rather patchy here and there. Maungakaramea is good country, and it is also good country round to Mangapai, but there is poor country in between. On towards Waikiekie there is some poor scrub country, but on towards Mareretu there is good land, which is very rough. It is not farming country, so far as agriculture is concerned.

23. Will you also describe the country to the west?—Between Tauraroa and the Mangonui River to the east there is some poor country of the same description as that round Waikiekie. I cannot give the area exactly, but I should say there are possibly 2,000 or 3,000 acres of it. Outside of that patch I think the land is as good as anything we have in the country. Mr. Riddell's estate in the Omano Block is laid down in grass. Of the High School Reserve, eight or ten sections have been taken up.

24. *Mr. Evans.*] Is there much gum country in the district you talk about?—There are small patches of it, but it differs from the ordinary gum country. There are two isolated patches that are dog poor, but there is some gum land on the western side that grows grass equal to the best land. There is kauri growing on real good land here—black country, and that is as good as can be got.

25. Is there much Maori reserve?—I cannot give an accurate idea of how much Maori land there is, but there is a pretty extensive area. There is a lot of Government land which is being taken up, and there are a good number of settlers on private land which has been cut up and sold.

26. Do the Maoris hold all the flat land?—I would not put it that way. I think the Natives hold one of the best blocks in the north. It is only 8,000 acres, but they have other blocks besides. The Maoris undoubtedly hold some very good land. They usually hold back some of the best bits of it when they agree to sell.

27. *Mr. Steadman.*] What are the boundaries that enclose that 600,000,000 ft. of timber that you refer to?—From the Wairoa River to Tutamoe, and as far out as Ngapipito, about due north from here. That is on the Kaihu line.

28. Do you know the distance between Kaikohe and Opuā?—Twenty-two to twenty-four miles.

29. Do you not think that all that timber would go to Opuā, and not to Auckland?—I think that some of it might go to Opuā, but in my opinion the bulk of it will go elsewhere, because that is a milling district. If they are going to mill the timber outside of Auckland it will, I think, be milled on the river or in the bush.

30. Do you not think it would be milled in the bush?—Yes.

31. The best timber is exported. Do you not think they are sure to rail that timber to Opuā, thirty miles, instead of railing it to Auckland?—Yes, I think they would in the top end, but I think it would depend largely on the position in which they put their mills, and the position of the mills would depend on the location of the bulk of the timber.

32. How far would Tutamoe be from the central line?—Taking a direct line from the proposed railway to the top of the Tutamoe Range, it would run fifteen to eighteen miles.

33. Would none of that timber go by way of the Kaihu line?—Yes, from the top. All in the Tutamoe watershed would go into the Mangakahia.

34. When you get that far above the line it makes no difference as to whether we have the eastern or the western route?—That is so.

35. In that estimate of the land you gave did you include the land about Kaikohe?—I should take the line pretty close to the Kaikohe Township.

36. And in regard to anything to the east of that?—There is a big scope of country to the east which I think would be served by the present Kawakawa Railway.

37. That would not act as a feeder to the Main Trunk line?—No, I am inclined to think that trade would go by the Kawakawa route.

38. *The Chairman.*] With regard to these 600,000,000 ft. of timber: if the line were taken from the Gap straight to Whangarei and the main trunk line not proceeded with, would a stick of that timber go out?—The bulk of this timber would come out over the Trunk line if constructed, but a good deal could be floated out under present conditions.

39. Therefore, in order to tap that timber, it is necessary to construct the railway by the central route?—Undoubtedly.

40. You know the Ngapipito Valley: does not the timber lie some miles south of that valley?—Leaving out a patch of kauri at Ngapipito, which must go to Opuia, all to the south would go by the main line. I think there are scattered patches of timber in the Bay of Islands district that must go by the Kawakawa line—that is, timber in the Motutau.

41. When you made this estimate of 600,000,000 ft. of timber, were you referring to timber that would go by the Main Trunk alone?—Yes, and not timber that would go by the Kawakawa line at all.

42. And in your estimate you are not considering the Motutau timber nor the timber that lies on the west of the Tutamoe Range?—Not at all. It would have to go uphill.

WALTER HOLSTER examined. (No. 45.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—I am a farmer, residing at Houto, and have been for twenty years between Paparoa and Mangakahia. I have been twelve years at Houto.

2. Will you make a statement to the Commission?—I think that others have pretty well said all that I had to say; but there are a few things I would like to refer to. I think the western route opens up more isolated country than the eastern—country that is very badly roaded. I consider the land on the western route is superior to that on the eastern—that is, taking it as a whole. There are lands on the eastern route equal or probably better than some on the west; but there are patches of poor gum country between. In reference to the floods in the Mangakahia, I may say that I have had a lot to do with floods in that country. I was working at the construction of the Mangakahia Bridge at Titoki, and have seen the flood almost over the decking, with the exception of a few feet in the centre, where the camber is. That would be a rise of 71 ft. Where the eastern route crosses the Mangakahia, at the junction of the Wairua and Mangakahia Rivers, it is badly flooded, because of the willows. These have caused the river to flood very much. I saw two weeks ago a skidded road laid on the banks of a tributary of the Mangakahia River washed out for a mile in length. The road was not pegged down, as is the usual custom in flooded country.

3. *Mr. Coom.*] What height of flood would this washout represent?—About 40 ft.

4. How high are the banks at that point?—Something like 50 ft.

5. So that if the railway were laid 50 ft. above the river it would be 10 ft. above that flooded river-level?—Yes. That flood was not a high flood, compared with those we have had. It is the heavy rain that does the damage.

6. What is the maximum flood-level at the point you refer to?—It has gone over the 50-ft.-high bank by probably 10 ft.

7. What span of bridge would it take to cross the Mangakahia River?—I should say, something like 250 ft. to span the actual river.

8. Supposing you had a span of 250 ft., with an approach by trestle-work on the other side?—That could be carried out on the one side, where there is a long flat.

9. *Mr. Evans.*] Do the Maoris hold much country round your district?—Not much.

10. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Is there much timber to come down the Mangakahia yet?—Yes, provided it does not go by railway.

11. Provided the railway reaches Kirikopuni before it gets to Mangakahia, will they continue to float the timber?—Yes.

12. Do you think that if they see a prospect of getting the railway within three or four years they will hold off?—Private owners would, I think.

13. Would you say that the damage that might possibly accrue to the railway is by the rush of water down the hill as much as by the flood itself?—Yes—that is, the side valleys of the Mangakahia.

14. Has anything been done to clear the Mangakahia of the obstructions that are causing the floods?—A little money has been spent, but not much.

15. By the Government or privately?—By the Government, I understand. In one instance Mr. Hunter did it some years ago.

16. Do you know the country about Waikiekie?—Yes.

17. Take the road to Waikiekie that we will travel: where do you say that the good land will lie?—To the west of the road from Maungakarama.

18. Taking Waikiekie as the centre, what is the land about there?—Good dairying-country, comparing favourably with anything up here.

19. What is the benefit to be derived by taking the line to the west?—It travels a better class of country for settlement. It also opens up a more isolated country.

20. *Mr. Becroft.*] You started here, I understand, as a Crown tenant?—Yes.

21. What was the value of the land then?—The upset value was 14s. per acre when I took it up.

22. Was it a fair sample of the land in the district?—Yes.

23. What has the value increased to at the present time?—Taking the property right through, I think I have had an offer of something like £6 per acre.

24. You have purchased land recently?—Yes.

25. Can you give the Commission, approximately, the purchasing-value?—Something like £2 10s.

26. Can you give the Commission some idea of the relative value that the railway would give?—I think the land would double itself in value.

27. Do you think that the success of the present settlers would induce others to come, as many witnesses have prophesied?—Certainly. In reference to the shipping of pork, I would like to say that in May of two years ago I shipped eight carcasses of pigs to F. G. Clayton at Auckland. These pigs were slaughtered on the Monday night as late as possible, and put on the tender at Kirikopuni on Tuesday morning, having been carried six miles. They were put on the Auckland market on Friday morning—I do not know when they reached Auckland—and out of these eight pigs there were 116 lb. marked “bad.” I had to sell it at $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound, and that ended my pork enterprise.

MAUNGAKARAMEA, THURSDAY, 27TH APRIL, 1911.

DAVID JAMES O'CARROLL examined. (No. 46.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, residing at Maungakaramea, where I have 294 acres of freehold. I have been forty-five years in the district.

2. Will you make a statement to the Commission regarding the matters we are inquiring into?—All my convictions are in favour of the central route of the Main Trunk line—that it should go to the east of the Tangihuas. My reason for saying that is that I consider it will open up a greater extent of practically undeveloped country—that is, country that it is practically impossible to develop by any other means than by a railway, for the reason that it has no rivers nor the sea itself to develop it. I do not say that the central route would be the greatest dividend-paying concern in the present state of the country, but I say it would improve and develop the country, and do the greatest good to the greatest number eventually; and I consider that in the matter of a railway that is to be established for all time we should look to the future to a very considerable extent. At the same time I think, from a business point of view, it would be good business to connect with Whangarei from McCarroll's Gap, because it would link up two lines that are within measurable distance, and I quite believe that by connecting with Whangarei the line would get the benefit of a lot of country that would thus be reached by the Main Trunk, and perhaps get it sooner. I do not propose to make capital out of any disadvantage I could point out by the line going on the western side, because I think it is bad policy to throw mud in that way. I quite admit that if there was a branch to Dargaville it would be right and proper, as the wants of the place warranted it; but at the present time a line to the west of the Tangihuas would have to compete with the river traffic on the Wairoa, and it would cross the river at Kirikopuni, where it is navigable to good-sized vessels drawing perhaps 12 ft. to 14 ft. of water. In addition to that, it has always been claimed that the Mangakahia was one of the objectives of the Main Trunk; also, I might say that in crossing the Wairoa at a point where it is navigable the line would have to make a detour to cut off a portion of the Mangakahia, particularly the lower end, besides cutting off the navigation at the bridge where it crosses the river. Another point I consider in favour of the eastern route is that Maungakaramea has been made the centre of the North Auckland districts by the Defence Department in connection with the Territorial movement, and I think that that is a very strong reason indeed why the railway should go through or close to Maungakaramea, seeing that it is the centre from which the various districts take their bearings. In addition to its being the centre, it is realized by the military authorities that it is an ideal place for holding encampments. There has been a good deal said about the revenue to be derived from timber on the western route. I do not consider myself that the timber, either east or west of the Tangihuas, or, for the matter of that, where it will junction at Mangakahia, needs consideration at all, because there is practically no timber on either route, and, even if there was timber, it will be taken out in the usual way. Water is by far the cheapest way of dealing with timber. The mills on the Wairoa must be fed, and the owners of the mills own most of the timber in the north, with the exception of the State forests. It is my opinion that the only timber that the railway will serve profitably, and the only timber the railway can hope to get at all, is on the extension of the Kaihu line, which extension will tap a belt of timber that cannot be got out by any other means, and which is larger than any other belt of timber in the north. Time is not of vital importance in the delivery of timber, so long as it is delivered in a sound condition. If it was seen fit to carry the line from the Gap to Whangarei, there are a lot of natural products that could be made profitable use of, and which would be developed by that connection. It is on the tapis now that close to Whangarei cement-works will be established, and it is well known that there is an inexhaustible deposit of cement at Tikirangi, close to where the line would go. There is also a vast extent of coalfields from Hikurangi on to Towai, and perhaps to Kawakawa. Then, again, the opinion has been expressed that other valuable minerals—gold and silver—are to be found, in the Puhipuhi district for instance. Another point in respect to the through line from Bay of Islands to Auckland is that probably the oversea mails would be landed at Bay of Islands so as to gain time, which would be a very important item. Given a through connection by way of Whangarei, steamers could land their mails at Opua, and get away again on their course to Sydney. I think also that when the Panama Canal is completed, which would be probably by the time the two pieces of railway are connected, there would be greater developments in that direction. The fruit industry, I consider, would get a great fillip if the Main Trunk was put through on the eastern side. There are many valuable orchards now from Port Albert

down this way, which would be developed at a greater rapidity if there was quick and speedy transit ; and all along the eastern slopes of the Tangihuas is admirably adapted for fruit-growing. In fact, I have heard it stated by advocates of the western route that there is a valley close to where I live that would make a fortune if planted in peach groves. I believe there has been a good deal of capital made by advocates of the western route regarding the poor quality of the land on the eastern side. Even supposing we admit that to be true, which we do not, it is admitted that the poor patches will grow fruit if properly cultivated. Another great point in favour of the eastern route is that the land is held in smaller holdings, which means a greater population. On the western side of the Tangihuas the land is held in large holdings, and largely for speculative purposes. As regards population and the number of stock, I do not think it is my place to go into that, as the members of the Commission are probably better acquainted with the statistics than I could be. I know that stock have been driven from Whangarei right to Wayby to get the benefits of railway communication. The dairying industry would get a great lift if there was railway communication to develop the country. In that connection I may say that the district from Maungakaramea to Mangakahia has no other way of distributing its produce than by a railway : it has no rivers, and the produce has to be packed or sledged to the point from which it has to be carried. I am a supplier of the Whangarei Dairy Factory, and I live seventeen miles from Whangarei, and there are fellow-suppliers of mine who live considerably farther, and our cream and their cream has to be sledged—by one for the whole year—to the receiving-station. There has been a lot said about freight being 7s. 6d. a ton. That is the very minimum to the Whangarei Town wharf, and it is only with regard to a single class of goods. Compared with freights to Wairoa, when cartage is considered, there will not be much to show in our favour. If there is any hardship in that connection it is on our side. There is a great difference between a freight to your wharf, from which you can take the goods to your house and the same freight to the wharf from which you have to cart for a distance of seventeen miles. It simply means here that it is often impossible to get your cartage done at any price. There are plenty of times when we have to pay 1s. and 1s. 6d. per hundredweight to get cartage, and we have to take it as a compliment to get it done at that. In the early days we had to bring all our goods in on our own backs. That shows this district has been settled for a considerable time. I would like to refer to the school-roll. The number of children on the roll of the Maungakaramea School is seventy-seven, and thirty years ago there were sixty-two on the roll. That shows that if we started at nothing we have held our own pretty well ever since. That also shows that since that time we have been pretty consistent, and there have been several relays of good citizens provided from that school in the meantime. As regards the quality of the land, I think the land on this side will compare favourably with the land on the western side, or anywhere you like to go. There is land on this side of the mountains that will compare favourably with any land in New Zealand. It has been said in evidence that the land on the western side was good land. I admit that ; but at the same time it was said that the land on the eastern side would not feed a grasshopper to the acre. That is not a fair thing to say. At the agricultural shows held on this side there has been cattle and stock shown which will compare favourably with that of many other places in New Zealand with greater railway facilities. There has been stock sent from Whangarei to Auckland shows which has taken first prize—fat stock at that. I would like to mention that this district has been settled for fifty years, and it has been settled by men who helped to make the country what it is. They came here to carve out homes for themselves ; they made the land their own ; and their children grew up inculcated with the same spirit ; and it has been looked upon almost as a birthright that the railway would pass through their country at some time.

3. *Mr. Evans.*] You would like to have the Whangarei connection and also the eastern route ?
Yes.

4. What is the present rate of freight from Auckland to Maungakaramea ?—It varies according to the goods. To Mangapai, which is our nearest port, twelve miles away, the freight is 12s. 6d. From there to here it is a matter of circumstances—1s. to 1s. 6d. a hundredweight ; and at times we cannot get it done at all.

5. *Mr. Romayne.*] The Commission have been told that the freights from Auckland to Mangapai wharf were as low as 5s. a ton by scow and 7s. 6d. to 8s. 6d. by steamer : have you benefited by any such low rates ?—Never.

6. The rates quoted by previous witnesses are not correct ?—I am quoting the freights of the Northern Steamship Company by boats that make daily and weekly calls. I have lived as much in the Wairoa as here, and I have known freights landed there practically for nothing because they were carried as ballast—potatoes and flour particularly.

7. Could you believe that there is a charge of 12s. 6d. to Mangapai, and that it is only 12s. 6d. to Whangarei, higher up the harbour ?—I am not in a position to say. I know that any freights I have paid have been 12s. 6d. to Mangapai. I have not had much to do with it.

8. If the line was constructed by the eastern route, would you get all your goods from Auckland by that route ?—I should think so, but cannot say.

9. You would get them by the cheapest route ?—That, I think, would be by railway, because of the saving in cartage, which at present is a very heavy item.

10. Do you think the railway would get the cement you mention to carry, and that it would not go by sea ?—I think there would be a big freight by railway.

11. To Auckland ?—It would be distributed along the line, and perhaps to Auckland also.

12. Is there a large demand for cement in the country ?—I consider that it will be used largely by public bodies for bridges, culverts, &c.

13. You cannot tell the Commission how many hundredweight of cement were used in this settlement last year ?—No. It has not been used here as it should have been, because the rate of cartage is prohibitive.

14. You assume that coal from Whangarei to Auckland would be carried by railway?—That is so.
15. *Mr. Coom.*] Could you tell the Commission from which point you would start the branch to Dargaville?—It is not for me to say, I should think.
16. You think it possible to make a route?—Yes, from somewhere south of McCarroll's Gap. I am not prepared to say where it should go from.
17. Is there a large area of land in this district capable of growing fruit?—I consider so.
18. Is there a market for it?—Yes, Auckland and farther south.
19. Can you tell me the comparative areas of good and bad land on the east and the west? Is there more bad land on the east or the west—say, within a distance of five or six miles of the proposed railway?—I consider that the land on the eastern side is more capable of being developed by the plough than the land on the western side. It is more undulating.
20. There is a greater area of land capable of being developed on the eastern side than on the western side?—Yes.
21. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Can you give any idea of the distance from Maungakaramea to the Wairoa River in a direct line?—It is not very far.
22. More than twenty miles?—I would say so.
23. If there are only a few miles between the eastern and western routes and twenty miles from Dargaville, and you are only twelve miles from Mangapai, would not the western route be the most central?—I do not think so.
24. You agree that there should be a branch line from the Gap to Whangarei?—I think it is good business.
25. Do you know the route that is suggested for that connection?—Not definitely.
26. Do you know how far it would go from this place?—No.
27. Have you heard it stated that the line will come from somewhere north of McCarroll's Gap to Maungakaramea and on to Whangarei?—I have not heard it stated.
28. If we have a line from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei which goes *via* Maungakaramea, do you think it would be good business also to put the central line through Maungakaramea?—I do not say that the railway should come here for the purpose of developing Maungakaramea, but to develop the country farther ahead.
29. You would not, as a business man, put two lines through the country within a mile or two of each other, would you?—I consider there must be a connection with Whangarei, as a town of importance.
30. You are within twelve miles of Mangapai, and the Whangarei-Gap connection must pass somewhere on that twelve-mile line: you do not suggest that it should go to Mangapai?—No.
31. Would that line go within six miles of Maungakaramea?—What I mean is this: If the line goes *via* the eastern route, I advocate a connection with Whangarei, but if the line does not go either east or west it would be good business for the line to go to Whangarei straight to the Gap.
32. You advocate the central line as the first consideration?—Yes.
33. And whether east or west you would still have the central route for development purposes?—Yes.
34. As the connection between Whangarei and the Gap must pass within ten miles, if you like, of Maungakaramea, would it not therefore be unwise to put the central line also at Maungakaramea or thereabouts?—If the central line is adopted I am not prepared to say where the connection to Whangarei should be from.
35. Have you seen it stated that the McCarroll's Gap - Whangarei line would be twenty-seven miles?—That is so.
36. Then, that must be from somewhere that is north of McCarroll's Gap?—From the nearest point to Whangarei.
37. How far is this place from Whangarei?—Fourteen miles.
38. Then, if the line is to be twenty-seven miles the connection could not be from here?—No.
39. *Mr. Steadman.*] Do you know how far it is from Mangapai to the east coast?—I could not say definitely.
40. You do not know how far it is from Mangapai to Marsden Point?—About thirty miles.
41. *The Chairman.*] Is that thirty miles across the water, or round the bay by land?—It is forty miles to Waipu, and Marsden Point is on the same line, but not so far away.

WILLIAM CRAWFORD examined. (No. 47.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, residing at Maungakaramea, where I hold 510 acres, and I am in company with two sons in 1,680 acres in the Northern Wairoa, on the Awakino Creek. All my land is freehold. I have been in the district just on forty-six years.
2. Would you make a statement to the Commission?—I may say that I quite agree with what Mr. O'Carroll has said about the Main Trunk going east of the Tangihua Range, with a branch to Whangarei, and also a branch to Dargaville. I think if the Main Trunk line was pushed on without connecting with those two centres it would be a very poor-paying proposition, because we must always look to the population to find the traffic for a railway. I may say that I am one of the old settlers of Maungakaramea. I was the son of a pioneer, and in the early days we had to cut our way through as best we could. We were not spoon-fed by the Government, but had to cut our own tracks to our sections. Many a time the settlers would go to Mangapai for a bag of flour, only to find that the cutter was not there, and they would have to live on pork. The families of those old pioneers are still here, and they are the principal part of Maungakaramea to-day. We have had a hard struggle to get the district

to the state it is in to-day. Few of the present generation know anything about it. I notice that evidence adduced at Northern Wairoa advocated that the large runs should be acquired by the Government, and cut up, and that the land would then carry a large population. I might say that the old settlers of Maungakaramea have done all that on their own. They have not depended on the Government for any assistance whatever, and ever since this railway was first mooted, during the time that the Hon. Mr. Mitchelson was Minister of Public Works, when an engineer was sent to lay off the line, which went through Maungakaramea and skirted round the outside of Whatitiri, we have felt that we would get the benefit of it. Many people remained here on the strength of being able to participate in the benefits of it. The districts interested in the eastern route are Waikiekie, Mareretu, Tauraroa, Ruarangi, Mangapai, Maungakaramea, Tangihua (1, 2, and 3), Whatitiri, Maungatapere, Manuporoti, Kaitaia, and Ruatangata. The most of these districts have been settled from the early days. I may say that the most of that country is fully settled at the present time, and is not held in large blocks. As regards the agricultural qualifications of Maungakaramea, Kaitaia, Maungatapere, Whatitiri, Manu, and Poroti, I do not think you could get much better land in any part of New Zealand. I have been experienced in agriculture all my life, and I know that any of those districts with fair treatment will give a good return. I am not so much interested in the live-stock question, and am more inclined to take up the question of the dead-stock. Those districts being well adapted for agriculture, I consider that they would compare favourably with the district of Pukekohe. You all know the amount of trade that is conveyed from the Pukekohe Station, and if those districts I have mentioned had the same facilities I see no reason whatever why they would not give just as good a return, and cause as much traffic. I might say that most of those districts have got to the end of their first development. The second development is going to take a great deal more consideration than the first, because on the first development we have simply to provide ourselves with an axe and billhook, whereas now we require to have a plough and every known implement. When we get into an agricultural district it does not mean traffic only one way. It means traffic both ways, because ground on which crops are grown requires to be fed, and there is no doubt that there would be a great inward traffic in manure and lime. I am one of the directors of the Whangarei Dairy Factory, which was started four years ago. In our first year we made 106 tons, and this year we made 212 tons, which shows that we have exactly doubled our output in four years. I have no doubt that the Maungatapere and Hikurangi Factories are increasing at the same rate. Butter is better handled by train than by ship, and if there was a branch line going to Whangarei, by the time it got there, if our increase went on at the same ratio as in the last four years, we should have something like 1,200 to 1,400 tons during the season. The freight on that butter costs us £1 per ton to Auckland. There are also the charges for cartage, railage to Onehunga, and shipping to Wellington. I see no reason why that butter should not be trained right through from Whangarei to Wellington. I have no idea what the charges might be, but I should say that they would be less than we are charged at the present time. The disabilities we are under in delivering our cream to Whangarei are considerable. In some cases we have to cart it twenty miles, at a cost of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound on every pound of butter-fat delivered in Whangarei. I think the western side has a great advantage over us. They can collect cream on the river from seventy to eighty miles without having any mud to contend with.

3. *Mr. Evans.*] Would you have the connection with Whangarei made before or after the completion of the Main Trunk?—I would connect as soon as possible, if it is wanted to be made a paying proposition.

4. What exports would you send away by the railway?—Anything in the agricultural line.

5. This place has been settled for fifty years, and what is the export per month?—I could not say. When I came here there were two cows and a few sheep, and they are to be counted by the thousands now. We have two monthly sales held in the district, and the stock are mostly bought by speculators.

6. You do not export any produce at all?—I send away about 10 or 12 tons of early potatoes.

7. Are you as large a farmer as there is about here?—Yes.

8. Do you export 10 or 12 tons of potatoes every year?—Yes, about that.

9. You do not grow anything but potatoes and stock?—Butter and wool in addition. I sent away five bales of wool this year.

10. *Mr. Ronayne.*] You say that in the event of the railway being completed to Auckland butter would be sent right through by railway to Wellington: are you aware of the fact that the butter produced in the Taranaki district is not sent by railway to Wellington, but is shipped at New Plymouth, Patea, Wanganui, and Foxton for Wellington?—No.

11. You are a much longer distance from Wellington than any of those places I have mentioned, and it is scarcely likely that you would be able to make better freight arrangements than the Taranaki farmers, and the result would be that you would send by sea or to Auckland?—It was a thought of my own that it could be done more economically that way.

12. What do you mean by dead-stock?—Agricultural produce.

13. *Mr. Coom.*] Is there more good land on the western side comparatively than on the eastern side of the Tangihuas—say, five or six miles on either side of the range?—I should say there was more good land on the east.

14. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] You mentioned Mareretu: is that not McCarroll's Gap?—I believe McCarroll's Gap is in Mareretu.

15. That will be benefited by whatever route is taken?—That is so.

16. Did I understand that you advocate that the central route should go on to Maungakaramea, and before it goes any further a branch should be made to Whangarei?—Yes.

17. Have you no consideration for those north of this?—Yes, I have, but I have consideration for ourselves too. I would like to see it a paying proposition.

18. You want a connection with Auckland and Whangarei before the settlers in the north get any communication at all?—How long have the settlers of Maungakaramaea ploughed through the mud without any roads at all.

19. Is the whole country west of Tangihua on the road to the river?—Most of the settlers are.

20. Do you know anything as to the freights to your property on the Northern Wairoa?—I am not quite clear on the subject.

21. Do you know where they take grass-seed by steamer to?—Dargaville.

22. How is it conveyed from Dargaville?—It is carted on to the sections, a distance of six or seven miles.

23. You have no idea as to the cost?—I have not.

24. *Mr. Becroft.*] You made a comparison between this district and the Pukekohe district for agricultural purposes: could you give the Commission an idea of the capabilities of this district as a producer?—I have seen over 60 bushels of wheat grown to the acre and 16 tons of potatoes to the acre. We never thresh the oats: it is cut into chaff.

25. Does this district grow enough vegetables for its own consumption?—Yes.

26. Do any potatoes come in?—Yes, but none are being imported at the present time.

27. Are any exported?—They have all been sent out by now.

28. Is any chaff imported?—Not at present, I think. I have some to sell, and I think they will come to me rather than go to Auckland for it.

29. Are you aware that Pukekohe exported thirty thousand pounds' worth of potatoes this year?—I understand they sent away somewhere about five hundred thousand pounds' worth of produce from within six miles of Pukekohe Station.

30. You think that this district will compare favourably with the Pukekohe district when the railway is connected?—Yes.

31. Supposing this connection with Whangarei were made, which port would you make use of most, Whangarei or Auckland?—What was for the Auckland market would go over the line to Auckland. Whangarei is not much of a market for us, and what we send there generally goes on to Auckland.

32. *The Chairman.*] You say you have sales here every month: who are the buyers?—Whangarei buyers.

33. Where do they take the cattle to?—I cannot say; sometimes to Whangarei.

34. What stock are you carrying on your 510 acres to-day?—Sixty head of cattle, of which between thirty and forty are milkers; about two hundred sheep; and ten or twelve horses. I might say that I sold eighty head of cattle about two months ago.

35. This is your winter carrying-capacity you have there now?—Yes.

36. How much of your land is unimproved?—It has been improved once, but a good part of it has gone back to nature since.

37. Into tea-tree?—Yes.

38. The grass has run out?—Yes.

39. In advocating that the Main Trunk, when it reaches Maungakaramaea, should then go into Whangarei you had in your mind's eye, I presume, the connecting-up of those two places?—Yes.

40. The line from McCarroll's Gap running through Maungakaramaea and then branching off to Whangarei would give railway communication to those various places you have mentioned?—I do not know whether it could do so to all of them, but the Main Trunk would benefit them all.

41. The Main Trunk to Maungakaramaea and then branching to Whangarei would benefit them all?—Yes. The Main Trunk would have to go farther than Maungakaramaea to serve Maungatapere.

42. Does not the Parish of Maungatapere run from Whatitiri to the sea?—Yes.

43. Would not the line from Maungakaramaea to Whangarei go through Maungatapere Parish?—It would go through it, but would not touch the good land.

44. Would it not bring the whole of the parish within four or five miles of the railway?—Probably it would.

45. How far is Whatitiri from here?—Four or five miles.

46. Then, if the line went from here in a north-easterly direction to Whangarei, would it not bring Whatitiri within four or five miles of that line also?—I do not think so.

47. How far from Whatitiri are you here?—As the crow flies four or five miles.

48. If the line came here, would it not be within four or five miles of Whatitiri?—You must take the length of the road.

49. Is not Whatitiri in a northerly direction from here?—Yes.

50. Would not the line be northerly?—Yes.

51. Would not that bring it nearer Whatitiri than Maungakaramaea is?—I do not think so.

52. At all events, it is four or five miles from here. What other districts would the Main Trunk line serve other than those you have mentioned if it was taken to Maungakaramaea and from there on to Whangarei?—I am not acquainted with the other districts further out. It would go into the lower end of Mangakahia.

LESLIE PEERS ADAMS examined. (No. 48.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—At Maungakaramaea. I farm 115 acres, and have been twenty-eight years in the district.

2. Will you make a statement to the Commission about the matter we are inquiring into?—I am a strong advocate of the railway connection from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei, as such a line will pass through the most payable country in the northern peninsula. Ninety per cent. of the land on that route is agricultural land. Kaikohe should also be connected with Auckland

as soon as possible, as the country there will carry an enormous population once the land is out of Native hands. I have no wish to inflict hardship on any of my neighbours, but taking the line through the centre—east or west—would not be a payable proposition for many a long day. Most of the land on either of those routes consists of extremely broken country, and as soon as it has been cropped its value is lost as far as agriculture is concerned, and then is fit only for running sheep and cattle on. It has been stated in evidence that these hills produce beef. They do when the grass is new, but after that they are only fit to carry “stores.” To-day a man on 200 acres might do well, but in five years he would require 300 acres of the same land to get the return he does to-day. My neighbour, Mr. Crawford, the last witness, referred to the prospects here to-day, but it is no use taking notice of what we are doing to-day, as our farms are simply lying idle for want of communication. I have known of as many as three hundred sheep being fattened on 5 acres of turnips in Maungakarama, but had it not been for the fact that we had been looking forward to getting a railway here, most of us would have settled in other districts.

3. *Mr. Evans.*] If you can fatten sheep in that way, why is not more stock being sent south?—The sheep I refer to belonged to a man to whom money was not much of an object. He was not a struggling farmer like most of us, but could afford to do things that we cannot.

4. What is the difficulty in regard to getting the sheep away?—The difficulty in getting manure, and the want of capital to buy the three hundred sheep with.

5. *Mr. Coom.*] You said you thought the line neither to the east or west of the Tangihuas would pay even if you extended it to Kaikohe?—It would pay, no doubt, when it got near to Kaikohe, and to Kaikohe itself; but as regards the intermediate country, it will be many a long day before it will pay.

6. You said that most of the country is broken, and eventually becomes fit only to run “store” sheep and cattle on?—Yes; many acres of it which have been settled for any length of time will not to-day carry sheep or cattle, because of the fern.

7. Does that apply to the land about Maungakarama?—No. We can plough and break up our land, but the other land I am speaking of you cannot work very readily, because the grass dies out. It will not pay.

8. Does that apply to all the hill country?—Perhaps on a few little patches of limestone the grass might last a little longer, but eventually it dies out even there.

9. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Has any land been sold here lately?—No, we are permanent settlers here, and we value our homesteads fairly high; but what the actual market value is I cannot say.

10. What have persons seeking to buy land in this district been offering for it?—I cannot say, but any little bit which has been offered has been very soon picked up.

11. Could you name the price?—I heard it was about £6 or £7 per acre.

12. Do you not know that land has been selling in other parts of the Dominion for a much higher price than that?—We have sold land up to £50 and £100 per acre in Maungakarama.

13. Are you not aware that land has been sold in other parts of the north for more than £6 per acre which has been in grass for more than five years?—Yes. In Mangapai there was land sold the other day for £22 10s. per acre. I have no intention of selling mine, as I do not believe in land-speculation in any shape or form.

14. Have you had any experience of land in any other district?—At Waikiekie, where I was dairying two or three years ago, and I fancy I had higher returns then.

15. Did you travel into what is known as the Omano Block?—No, I have not been there.

16. You do not know anything about the country there?—No.

17. *Mr. Becroft.*] Are you acquainted with the land north of this district?—Yes.

18. How far up?—For very nearly a hundred miles, up to Kaihu.

19. Are you prepared to apply the scathing denunciation you have applied to-day to the land on the eastern and western routes to all that land also?—No, not to all of it. I exempt the land near Kaikohe.

20. If I were to tell you that twenty-five miles north of here land is valued at £25 per acre—the land you have condemned—would you believe it?—No. I pity the men who bought it.

21. What do you produce here?—I have grown from 20 to 30 tons of mangolds under difficulty as regards manure, and about 15 tons of carrots to the acre, and oats that would chaff 3 tons to the acre.

22. Are you still doing that?—It depends on the season.

23. Did you not give it up because you found something else that paid better?—It was given up because we found that the expense we were under in getting our manures was too great to justify the risk. If we were near Puhekohe, and could get manure for £5 per ton, it would be different, but we have to pay £10 per ton here.

24. *The Chairman.*] What stock are you carrying at present on your place?—About thirty head of horses and cattle. I carry no sheep. I grow no crops for sale, but only for home use. If I grew crops, I could not sell them, because I could not send them away.

JAMES CAMERON MILLER examined. (No. 49.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—At Maungakarama. I am a farmer, storekeeper, and bush contractor, and have been here forty-five years. My holding is 500 acres of freehold in Maungakarama, between 100 and 200 acres in Waikiekie, and nearly 600 acres in Kirikopuni.

2. Would you like to make a statement about the matter we are inquiring into?—I still hold to the original central route as laid down some years ago on the eastern side of the Tangihuas. I believe the line should be kept as far away as possible from competing with the water carriage, and that the railway should be run through country that will pay the best. Water carriage will always compete with a railway, and as this is a question of east or west, I consider that on the

Wairoa River there is ample opportunity for as much opposition to the railway as any one cares to take advantage of. As regards the trade in cattle, and the trouble there is in getting them out of Kaipara Harbour, I sympathize with the people who are engaged in that trade, because we have the same difficulty on the east coast in a more aggravated form; but as soon as the line crosses at Young's Point that difficulty will be overcome. On the eastern side we ship at Mangapai, and on several occasions cattle have had to wait a week or more, and then have had to be driven back to the paddocks because they could not be taken by sea to their destination. That is a positive hindrance to growing beef or going in for fattening of any kind. Should the line go to the west, and cross at Kirikopuni on the Whangarei-Dargaville Road, according to the evidence given on the west, a connection from Kirikopuni to Dargaville could be made with a length of thirteen miles only. It would leave Whangarei on that same route about twenty-five miles to the east, and if a connection could be made for thirteen miles the settlers half-way between these two lines would be only six miles and a half either way from the railway. Should the eastern line be adopted it crosses the same route about seventeen or eighteen miles from Whangarei, as it is nearly half-way between Whangarei and Dargaville. The distance between Whangarei and Dargaville is, I think, about thirty-eight miles. Taking the country alongside the Tangihua Ranges, east and west, there is no comparison as regards the population and the number of cattle carried between the east and west, the greatest number being on the east. It is acknowledged by western people that on the eastern side of the Tangihuas are valleys which form ideal country for fruit-growing, and with cheap freights on the railway this industry would have a chance of being successfully started. I see no reason why in a few years' time there should not be ten miles of orchards on this warm side of the range, but the southern side could not do it. As regards the connection with Whangarei, if the Main Trunk line is run through here, the shortest possible connection should then be made with Whangarei and the Main Trunk. Whangarei, being a distributing centre, could then send its goods by the Main Trunk for distribution up and down the line, north or south, east and west. You can now buy goods in Whangarei as cheaply as you can buy them in Auckland. The land to the west, from Waikiekie northwards, as far as the Tauraroa, is occupied by people who live on the eastern side, who hold those sections as a back run. There is no new land to take up there. The sections are all on the west, and if the western line were deviated I own nearly 600 acres that would be available for settlement within 50 chains of the line. I am not belittling any of the western land, but I can only say it is good grazing-land, and can only be used for that purpose, as stock can always be fattened for a market when general agricultural produce could not be grown. A great deal has been said about freight. Now, a ton of coal costs £1 8s. in Auckland, but by the time it reaches the blacksmith here it costs him £3 10s. 6d.—12s. 6d. freight to Mangapai, and £1 10s. a ton cartage to here. To give you an idea of what our roads are like, a carter told me on one occasion that it was impossible for him to convey a crate of six fowls to Mangapai. As to timber, we look forward to the time when the timber will be all gone from both the eastern and the western sides; but while it is being disposed of it will continue to be transported, as hitherto, by water. As to the statement that the eastern route traverses poor gum lands, I will leave the Commission to consider what they have seen for themselves regarding that point. A lot has been said about floods being greater on the eastern side than on the western, but the eastern line crosses land of the same character as the western route; the water runs from the east to the west, and in my timber-raftering experience I have always found more water towards the mouth of the rivers. I think the floods have been exaggerated.

3. *Mr. Coom.*] You say you own 600 acres at Kirikopuni: what condition is that land in?—About 150 acres in grass, and the rest standing bush. The 150 acres has been in grass about six years, and the grass has not died out. It is good grazing-land, and I have seventy head of cattle running on the whole area.

4. What is your opinion of the value of the country on the western route?—It is very good pastoral country, of a sandy nature.

5. Will the grass hold on it?—Yes; but the worst trouble is the fern, and unless you stock it very closely you will not keep the fern down. The land on the west is rather too rough to ever become agricultural land.

6. Have you any suggestion to make as to a branch line to Dargaville from either the eastern or the western route?—The best way to serve Dargaville would be to run a branch line through Waikiekie—a little south—to Dargaville; but I have my doubts as to the Dargaville people using the railway at all while they have the waterway to Helensville.

7. You would not propose to cross the Wairoa?—No.

8. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] How many acres have you in grass in this district?—About 400.

9. What do you carry on it?—About 170 to 180 head of stock.

10. And at Kirikopuni you are holding 150 acres?—Yes, with 450 acres of bush land besides.

11. Is that very steep land?—Some of it is.

12. Do you not think that land compares fairly well with the carrying-capacity of this district?—Yes, it is good grazing-land. I do not belittle the western side for grazing.

13. How long have you held the Kirikopuni land?—About six years, and I value it now at £6 an acre as it stands.

14. What do you value property in this district at?—It varies in amount up to £20 an acre.

15. Can you give the Commission any idea of the value of your 400 acres in this district?—It is not valued by the Government as high as that.

16. You have made rather an extraordinary statement to the effect that floods are more likely to take place towards the mouth of a river than a long way up the river, where it is narrower: can you support that statement with facts?—I know that we can raft better the nearer we get to the mouth of a river than we can farther up towards the back: we can follow the logs down better.

17. You mean, follow the water down?—Yes.

18. In your experience as a rafter, where did your logs go down the fastest or get on to the banks more often—in the upper reaches or lower down?—Lower down, always.

19. What do you call lower down?—The farther you go down. Take the Waiotama, for instance.

20. Are you speaking of small rivers?—I take that one as an illustration.

21. Another statement you made was that you would advocate the keeping of a railway as far as possible from water competition?—Yes.

22. Why do you suggest a connection with Whangarei, then?—Because in the centre we have no means of getting our goods unless we have a connection with a port somewhere, and it is always a sound business proposition to connect with the nearest port, such as Whangarei is.

23. Would not the same argument apply to a connection with Kirikopuni, a good port where you have miles of river-banks on which hundreds of settlers will be placed?—The river is open to any one who likes to run a boat on it, and people naturally will take advantage of the lowest freights. There is ample scope for steamship enterprise on the Wairoa River northwards.

24. If you applied the same argument to Whangarei you would have similar competition with your railway, would you not?—Not so much.

25. What led you to say that all the settlers on the western side are living on the Wairoa River?—It is so. Perhaps there are some a mile or two back from the range.

26. Is it not the fact that there are stores in the western district for miles back from the river?—Yes.

27. Practically there are not many beyond the deep water at Whangarei, while you can pick out as many as twenty on the Wairoa?—But the Main Trunk does not tap that country. I do not propose that the line should come straight on.

28. What does it matter whether you call it a Main Trunk line or a branch?—I should call it a branch to Whangarei.

29. Would you make a branch connection with Whangarei before going further north with the Main Trunk?—I do not know that I would do so, because I think that by the time the line gets here settlement will have progressed so quickly that there will be ample inducement to continue the line straight on.

30. *Mr. Steadman.*] Do you know how long it is since a valuation of this district has been made by the Department?—I believe it is about three years.

31. Is it not a fact that this district is valued at a very low rate compared with the real selling-values?—Yes; we would not think of parting with the land at the valuation figures.

32. *The Chairman.*] How far is it from here to Mangapai by road?—About ten miles.

33. Do you do your own carting?—Yes.

34. What load do you bring out?—In summer you can bring out in a cart 30 cwt., or perhaps 35 cwt. In the winter with four horses we can bring out 18 cwt., or a ton.

35. How many trips a day can you make in the summer-time?—I never think of making more than one trip a day.

36. What are the freights to Mangapai, maximum and minimum?—12s. 6d., all round, per ton.

37. What is the freight to Whangarei Town wharf?—7s. 6d.

38. Why are you charged the extra 5s.?—For transshipment from the “Ngapuhi,” while in the other case the goods come direct by the “Kanieri.”

39. Would a line from McCarroll’s Gap, running through Maungakaramea, and joining the Whangarei-Kawakawa line, suit this district as well as a main trunk line going through the Mangakahia?—I think so.

40. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Does the “Kanieri” go to the Mangapai wharf?—No. The goods come off by tender.

MAUNGAKARAMEA, FRIDAY, 28TH APRIL, 1911.

ROLAND HILL examined. (No. 50.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, holding 100 acres of freehold at Tangihua, four miles from Maungakaramea. I have been twenty-five years in the district.

2. Would you kindly make a statement to the Commission?—There is no doubt that the inhabitants up the Mangakahia Valley could do with a railway, but the quickest way to get to the north would be to go round by Maungakaramea, and join with the Whangarei line.

3. Do you advocate the railway being pushed on through the Gap to Whangarei before any other line is made?—Yes; I think that would give the greatest good to the greatest number. I am a director of the dairy factory, and we collect cream from right up the Mangakahia Valley. We learnt that the Northern Steamship Company were making great alteration in their rates, but on making inquiry we ascertained that the Bay of Islands people had been offered a reduction of 2s. 6d. more than they were asking for in order to prevent their traffic coming down to Whangarei. The inhabitants at the lower end of the Mangakahia Valley have been very severely punished.

PATRICK LAMB examined. (No. 51.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—At Tangihua No. 1 Block, six miles from Maungakaramea Post-office. I am a settler and grazier. I think I have 199 acres, and I have been twenty-five years in the district.

2. Will you kindly make a statement to the Commission?—On the western route there is steam communication to Pahi and Port Albert, and near to Paparaoa. South of the Gap there are ports on the Wairoa at Pahi, Paparaoa, and Port Albert. Eight miles of the Mangonui River is navigable, but the settlements are on the Wairoa side. The navigation of the Wairoa goes as far as Wharekohe, on the Mangakahia Stream, which may be called a continuation of the Wairoa. I know a little about the navigation of the Wairoa, and I consider if the railway went that side it would be iniquitous, for the reason that the passenger traffic might go by the railway instead of by the steamer, and it would be ruinous to the steamship company. Great pains have been taken for many years to work up the trade on the Wairoa. With the railway there, the freight alone might not pay the steamers, and there would be fewer vessels trading on the river. About twenty years ago I got up a petition to get a mail-service between Tangiteroria and Dargaville, and a subsidy was granted, and Captain Pearce instituted a four-weekly service. There is now a daily service up the river. The freight from Dargaville to Tangiteroria for the settlers is 5s. a ton, but there is a difference between the price charged to settlers and that charged to storekeepers. The freight from Tangiteroria to Helensville is 1s 6d., and the railway charge from Helensville to Auckland is 2s. per hundredweight; that is for two boxes of butter. The more that is sent the less is the price. I consider it would be iniquitous to make the railway by the western route, and to allow the steam traffic to be crushed out. The railway should be kept away as much as possible from the ports on the Wairoa and on the eastern side, too.

3. Are you in favour of the eastern or the western route?—The central route; but do not go near the Wairoa.

4. Are you in favour of going on with the central route or connecting with Whangarei?—I do not want the railway to connect with navigable waters at all. I would prefer no railway at all rather than it should go by the western route.

HENRY BERNARD SLOANE examined. (No. 52.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—At Mangapai. I am a farmer, and am stock agent for the Farmers' Union. I have been in the district for thirty-four years. In Waikiekie I have 800 acres of private leasehold with right of purchase, and I have 1,200 acres on the Tauraroa, private leasehold with right of purchase, and I have 490 acres of freehold at Ruakaka.

2. Would you make a statement to the Commission regarding the matters we are inquiring into?—I would very much like to see the Main Trunk line pushed ahead as fast as possible by the eastern route. As the main line is put in I should like to see it connected with Whangarei, as I think it would be a great advantage to the north and surrounding districts here.

3. Would you stop the main line whilst that connection is being put in?—I would like to see that chief work put on to the main line, and I should think that by the time the main line got to the nearest point the line from Whangarei would be pretty well ready so as to have the connection pretty well straight away, so that the traffic from the north could go over it at once.

4. You would advocate pushing on at once with the connection as soon as it gets to a suitable point of junction?—Yes.

5. In what order of precedence do you consider the work should be carried on? Do I understand you to say that the Main Trunk should be pushed on with all speed to the point of junction, and then on to Whangarei, and that after that the work on the Main Trunk should be proceeded with; or do you mean that the work should be continued on the Main Trunk, and take the chance of the junction to Whangarei?—I would be inclined to advocate going straight on to Whangarei. I would like to see the Main Trunk pushed on and the line from Whangarei southwards started at once, so that the two lines would reach the point of junction at about the same time. I have had a good deal to do with stock on both proposed lines, and have had to do with the shipping of stock. There have been a good many complaints about the bad handling and shipping of stock on the western route, and there has been a great deal said in favour of this side. I may say that I have held beef cattle at Mangapai for a fortnight waiting for suitable weather to ship, and tired of holding them there have sold out to a dealer, and half of the cattle were eventually shipped at Mititai.

6. *Mr. Ronayne.*] You said that the shipment of cattle by the western route was very bad?—I fancy there has been a great deal made of the matter of shipping cattle on that side.

7. Does that mean by punt or barge to Helensville and on from there to Auckland by railway?—Yes. Mr. Riddell, my neighbour, handles his cattle all to Mititai, and has never brought a load of cattle to Mangapai, and there is little or no difference in distance.

8. You think that cattle can be shipped to better advantage on the eastern coast than on the Wairoa River?—We have to hold for three weeks sometimes because of the weather, and then have to go on to the rail-head.

9. You do that with the desire to have direct railway communication with Auckland?—Yes.

10. *Mr. Coom.*] What is the country south of the western side of the Tangihuas—say, for a width of four or five miles?—There is a patch of very good alluvial flat on it, and the rest is hilly sandstone ground. It has been bush country, and a great deal has been cleared and fire run through the standing bush, but it has come up in fern again a bit.

11. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] How long have you held your large acreage?—Three years.

12. What land did you have before that time?—I had the freehold.
13. What are you doing with the land?—Grazing.
14. Does all that land lie on the eastern route?—No; the line on the western route would go through the corner of my Tauraroa property.
15. Which corner?—The west corner.
16. Where does the survey of the eastern line go on the same property?—It would be, roughly, eight miles away.
17. You are not stock agent for the Farmers' Union on the west side of the Tangihuas?—There is no reason why I should not be. I have to go where I am told.
18. They have an agent there?—Yes, but he may come here and I may go there, just as the matter suits.
19. How often have you been there in the last three years on business, purchasing stock?—I suppose within the last three months I have been there twenty or thirty times. I am frequently there.
20. How long ago was it that the cattle you refer to were delayed fourteen days at Mangapai?—This month, and it has happened on other occasions.
21. Is it a common thing for cattle to go from Mangapai to Mititai to be shipped?—No, they generally go to the rail-head after waiting a short time.
22. How do you know that half were shipped at Mititai?—I know that half went back to the paddock, and that half were eventually shipped.
23. Do you say that Mr. Riddell's cattle all go by ship?—All he consigns in his own name do.
24. A very large number of Mr. Riddell's stock do go to the rail-head?—A good number of them do.
25. Although the conveniences at Mititai are so great, they are not made much use of by Mr. Riddell?—By Mr. Riddell himself they are, but the general people who buy Mr. Riddell's cattle pick up other cattle on the way through, and might just as well bring Mr. Riddell's through with them and ship at the other end.
26. We were told at Whangarei that seven hundred head of cattle a month and sometimes fifteen hundred head go through to the rail-head: is that your opinion too?—There have been quite that number. A great percentage of the cattle grazed on the Wairoa come from Whangarei, and are reared principally on the eastern coast.
27. What do they go to the Wairoa for, to fatten?—Yes, and to break in the country.
28. If they told us in the north that most of the cattle in Whangarei come from the north, would you believe it?—Yes.
29. What number of places are sales held at in the neighbourhood of Whangarei?—Here and Kamo and Whangarei and Towai and Ohaewai. A great number of the cattle sold at these sales go through Whangarei to the rail-head.
30. Are there many cattle sold on the western side?—Yes.
31. Where do they go from, Whangarei?—A good many are driven through and sold there.
- For every beast that comes from Wairoa to Whangarei five hundred go from Whangarei to Wairoa.
32. Who are those who buy cattle at open sale in Wairoa?—Mr. Dreaden and Mr. Harding.
33. Is Mr. Dreaden on the Wairoa?—No, in Waikiekie.
34. Has Mr. Harding no land at Maunu?—Yes.
35. Does he not take stock to the Whangarei sale?—Not unless they are pedigree stock.
36. Do you know proportionately the number of cattle that go by the rail-head and that go by water?—I could not say.
37. *Mr. Steadman.*] Do you know the route from Mangapai to Auckland?—Yes.
38. How long are the cattle at sea on that run?—I think they reckon on about twelve hours after getting outside.
39. *The Chairman.*] What is the number of your section at Tauraroa?—I can supply you with it.
40. Who is the present owner?—C. E. Hayward.

Witness: From the 31st March, 1910, to the 31st March, 1911, there were shipped from Mangapai the following stock: 6,950 head of cattle, 200 head of sheep, 148 pigs. There were landed at Mangapai in the same time: 148 head of cattle and 2,348 head of sheep. I think nearly all this stock would go by rail in preference if we had the railway to Whangarei.

WAIKIEKIE, SATURDAY, 29TH APRIL, 1911.

GEORGE HUGH SMITH examined. (No. 53.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—At Waikiekie. I am a school-teacher, and have been residing in this district for about twelve months.

2. Do you wish to make a statement to the Commission as to the matter we are inquiring into?—A committee representing the settlers of this district was formed some time ago with the object of obtaining statistics to place before you to-day relating to this part of the country. They are as follows: The area of the Waikiekie Road Board District is 33,314 acres; rateable value according to the 1909 valuation, £60,302; unimproved value, £35,257; value of improvements, £25,045. The statistics we have been able to collect bear upon 25,948 acres. There are in grass, 13,892 acres; in arable land, 13,005 acres; in crop, 49 acres. There are 6,252 sheep, 4,468

cattle, 623 pigs, 170 horses. Approximately, there are 13,892 acres in grass, carrying what is equivalent to 25,423 sheep, or almost two sheep per acre. The freight to our nearest port—Mangapai—runs from 10s. to 12s. 6d. per ton. The cartage from Mangapai to this hall is £1 per ton in summer and £1 10s. in winter. It has been stated that the cartage to some of the holdings here, away from the main road, to places twenty miles from the port, has been as much as £3 10s. per ton. Dealing with the large holdings in this district, there are three of upwards of 2,000 acres, the largest being a little over 2,000 acres. There are eight of 1,000 acres, and twenty-one of 500 acres. The areas of upwards of 400 acres total 17,425 acres. That area would cut up into eighty-seven farms of about 200 acres or fifty-eight farms of about 300 acres. Immediately adjoining Waikiekie Road District there is one estate of 12,000 acres—the Omano Block—the owner of which is Mr. Riddell. That block would cut up into sixty farms of 200 acres each, or forty farms of 300 acres each.

3. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Would 200-acre farms be sufficient for the purpose of close settlement?—Some farmers consider they could do well at dairying on that area. One man told me only this morning that he has not 200 acres, and is doing very well indeed.

4. What is your nearest distance to the Wairoa River?—I could not say.

5. You gave us the number of sheep and cattle the land here could carry as equivalent to two sheep to the acre: is that what it is carrying now?—Yes, within the last three weeks.

6. *Mr. Steadman.*] On what basis have you worked out the calculation of two sheep to the acre? How many sheep to one beast?—A beast is equal to four sheep and a horse to five sheep.

7. Is not that rather large? We were told in another place that three sheep to one beast was the proper equivalent?—The figures I have given are what the farmers here reckon—one beast to four sheep and one horse to five sheep.

JAMES GILBERT WARD examined. (No. 54.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—At Waikiekie. I am the manager of the dairy factory here, and I have been eight months in the district.

2. Do you wish to make a statement to the Commission as to the matter we are inquiring into?—My reason for advocating one route over another is based entirely on my observations in connection with the dairying industry of this district. I have travelled through to within a few miles of McCarroll's Gap, along both the eastern and western routes, and the Waikiekie-Gap connection, and although I cannot say that I know every mile of the country, I know every chain of the land between McCarroll's Gap and east and west of the Tangihuas; and I am also convinced that there is one route only which will benefit this factory and make it one of the most flourishing in the north, while the other route will injure the factory and the dairying industry here. The factory here cost the settlers something over £2,000, the debt owing on it at present being about £300. All this has been done since the factory first started, in the season of 1904-5. The earnings of the factory since that period I cannot give you exactly, but they have been about £23,336. The number of suppliers at present is twenty-four. Within the area from which the butter-fat is coming there are six occupied farms not at present supplying us, but there is every probability that two of them will be sending in their supplies to us during next season.

3. *Mr. Steadman.*] What is the reason that they are not supplying?—One farmer has a fairly large area of land, and is carrying on a butchering business. In another case the labour is not available at present, but I think it will be supplying before long. As to another man, I am not prepared to say what his reasons are. In one case this season in this district, under present conditions, the man was making £1 5s. per cow per month for a herd of over twenty cows. In another instance where the land has been down twenty years in grass the returns for one of the best months was £1 3s. per cow per month for forty or fifty cows. If these farmers had facilities for getting manures and fertilizers to their places by rail they would be able to continue these returns for a much longer period during the season; but at present they cannot do so, because the manures cost them too much to bring here. As to the number of farms into which the area of the district can be cut into, we have taken each farm individually, and not the whole area irrespective of boundaries. We have carefully worked out whether each area is suitable for subdivision, and the figures stated by Mr. Smith I agree with. All these holdings would not average more than five miles from the eastern or western routes. The land on the route lying to the east of the Tangihuas is in the same position to-day that it was in when the first settlers went in there about forty years ago—in fern and tea-tree; in fact, it is worse, on account of fires going through it year after year. I refer now to the country south-east of the Maungakarama district and the Tangihuas. I advocate the construction of the line by the western route. There are no improvements on the eastern side of the line, with the exception of one valley of good land taken up and held by some men with money. All the improvements which have been made are on the land at the start of the eastern route, towards the Wairoa River. Land in standing bush forty years ago is being cut up, and I do not think there are any Crown lands in the whole lot worth speaking of. The improvements all lie to the west of the eastern route. I am not referring to the country north of the Tangihuas. With the exception of Waikiekie, which is the only settlement, this country has all been taken up in large holdings carrying stock, and suitable only for men who can afford to hold 2,000 or 3,000 acres. My reason for advocating the western route is because railway communication might prove a sufficient inducement to these holders to cut up their lands into small holdings, because I notice that wherever you have railway connection you have small holdings. The cattle-carrying capacity of this part of the country is four acres to a cow, and over the whole district, within striking distance of this factory, the country would run 7,356 cows on a basis of four acres to the cow. That would mean an increase over the present

supply to this factory in the proportion of about four to one. In respect to the connection with Whangarei, I have taken the trouble to go over the routes. We have heard suggested here by men who know the country intimately that a junction with Waikiekie and the Whangarei line at Kioreroa was what the engineers thought the most suitable solution of the matter. That would mean leaving Mr. Knorpp's route at Omuhware. Of course, the surveyed route would be better known to the Commission than to myself.

4. That is where you think it ought to be connected?—That is where we might suggest a connection should be made for your consideration later on. It would go in a southerly direction, and the general direction of the line connecting Waikiekie and Kioreroa would be 25 degrees north-east from Waikiekie. The cost of delivering butter to the freezer from here is as follows: Cartage into Mangapai, £1 to £1 10s. per ton, according to the price of the contract—at present it is £1 5s; the freight from Mangapai is £1 a ton; cartage and wharfage, Auckland, works out at about 2s. per ton. As against these amounts—totalling £2 7s. per ton—if we had the railway to take our butter direct to the freezer, instead of six handlings as at present, it would be handled only thrice—from the factory to the wagon (one), from wagon to truck (two), and from truck to freezer in Auckland (three handlings).

5. *Mr. Evans.*] What is the length of the milking season on the average?—Eight months.

6. Have you been over the western route?—Yes; I know it intimately.

7. Are you in favour of the western route?—Yes.

8. Did I understand you to say there are more improvements upon the western route than on the eastern?—Yes, from the Tangihua south to McCarroll's Gap, which is all the country I am dealing with.

9. Do you know the rate roll of the two districts?—No.

10. Do you honestly say that there is more settlement on the western side than on the eastern side?—I adhere to my statement, that there is more settlement taking place and more improvements on the land to the west of the eastern route than on the country to the east of the western route.

11. Are you aware that there are several large blocks of land on the western side held by syndicates?—I am aware of one large block held by one individual—Mr. Riddell.

12. What about Mr. Harding's block?—I have no recollection of his land. I went through his property where it runs down into Mr. Riddell's place when I was going through the western line, but that is the only view I had of it.

13. Do you know what rates per acre are collected in the western district?—No; I think the previous witness gave that.

14. Do you know what rates the Maori lands in the western district pay?—I do not think there is any Maori land in this district, or in the south.

15. Your district is the Waikiekie Road Board?—Yes, running up to the Tangihua Range.

16. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] In some districts they dairy all the year round, do they not?—Yes.

17. What prevents your doing that here?—I think the want of cropping and the inability to get manures for cropping for winter feed.

18. It is not the state of the roads?—They could not get them in even if they had good roads. If they had good railway communication you would find that dairying would advance here in winter-time better than it does in Taranaki, as the country will grow better crops for hay and ensilage. The farmers would be able to get their produce away to market. The farmer now has to sell his sheep and cattle to the dealer, while the cattle have to go down to Te Hana, and the travelling does not do them any good. One person told me that some sheep in this district would bring 5s. more per head if on the Auckland market. In another case a farmer sent some sheep by sea, and when they got to their destination he did not recognize his own sheep, they were so poor and dirty.

19. How many cows are the twenty-four suppliers of your factory dealing with now?—Eight hundred.

20. You have had previous experience in dairying?—Yes, in Taranaki, since 1898. Also at Matakana, and I spent a couple of years in the King-country. I have been the manager of a dairy factory before this, and also farming myself.

21. Taking your previous experience, will this district compare favourably with other districts as regards dairying?—This is the best district for dairying north of Auckland I have so far seen.

22. How does it compare with Taranaki?—I am quite satisfied that it is one of the best agricultural districts in the North Island.

23. Have you been in the bush districts of Taranaki?—Yes, when there was plenty of bush there.

24. How far from the railway were you?—At one place I was four miles away, at another I was twenty miles out.

25. Do you consider that this country northwards is as capable of supporting a railway as the Taranaki district is?—I do. I do not suggest that this land will produce as much as the Taranaki land, but I am certain it will repay the construction of a railway-line through it.

26. We are now sitting in the centre of your district?—Yes.

27. How far away are you from the Wairoa River?—Twenty miles, approximately.

28. How far from Mangapai?—Twelve miles.

29. Do you hold land in this district?—No.

30. You are not personally interested in this question?—No.

31. And you are not biassed either in favour of the east or the west?—No; I am doing this entirely in the interests of my employers.

32. We are now in the fork of the two routes?—Yes, at equal distance by either route of any probable station at Waikiekie.

33. *Mr. Steadman.*] As far as delivery of your produce at Auckland is concerned, either route would suit you?—Yes.

34. From how far south do you draw your supplies?—About three miles. Practically all our milk-supply comes from the west. To the place where we put a cart on this season on the eastern route there were only two suppliers. That is just outside of our immediate surroundings here.

35. Have you any rivals in the field?—No.

36. Where do the people who produce the supplies live?—There are none supplying dairy factories outside ours until you get into the Whangarei district.

37. Are there none south of Mangapai supplying cream?—The nearest settlers to the south of us going to the other factory are those eight miles away, and going to Maungaturoto.

38. Do you know where the Maungatapere Factory is?—Yes.

39. Do you know how far it is from this place?—No.

40. Would it surprise you to know they collect cream twenty-eight miles?—Not at all.

41. And with as good roads?—I am not aware what the roads are like there.

42. You say that the number of settlers has fallen off from your factory?—Yes.

43. How do you account for that?—One man has had a large contract to handle, but has announced his intention to come back next season; another has leased his large holding; while the third is going into another business.

44. What was the number at the start?—I do not know.

45. Do you not think the Taranaki land would have been taken up without the assistance of railways?—Yes.

46. And the land to the east and west of this part of the country in the same way?—Yes.

47. Do you not think that this piece of land here has been taken up and kept in its present condition because it is the best part of the district?—Yes, this piece here has been taken up because it is the best.

48. It is a piece of limestone formation?—Yes.

49. Is there any crystalline with the limestone in this district?—Yes; our roads are metalled with one of the finest samples of limestone.

50. Has there been any attempt on the part of the settlers here to utilize the valuable properties this limestone possesses?—If you refer to limestone suitable for agricultural purposes, I cannot say whether the limestone here is suitable or not.

51. Has there been any attempt made to use it?—Not that I know of.

52. What has the factory put through this season?—Over 32 tons, from twenty-four suppliers.

53. What age are you?—Thirty.

54. How long were you farming before you went dairying?—I have been farming since I was twelve years old. I was from twelve to eighteen years working on a farm.

55. In what district?—Taranaki.

56. *Mr. Evans.*] Would you be in favour of connecting Whangarei with McCarroll's Gap instead of going on with the western route?—Most decidedly not. It would be a great mistake, and a mad policy.

57. *The Chairman.*] How long has the local factory been in existence?—Since 1904-5.

58. For how far north are you acquainted with the land in this peninsula?—Just up to the Tangihuas. I have been round the mountains from here following the western route, and round Kirikopuni to Tangiteroria, then round to Maungakamea, and going down the eastern route.

59. You have not seen the Kaikohē land?—No.

HARRY HILFORD examined. (No. 55.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a storekeeper, residing at Waikiekie, where I have lived for forty-three years.

2. Would you make a statement to the Commission?—I know the country along both routes of the railway between McCarroll's Gap and the Tangihua Range, and I am in favour of the western route, with a connection from Whangarei connecting with the main line in the Waitira Valley between Mangonui and Tauraroa. I am in favour of the western route, as I consider it opens up good country which is not so easy to reach as the land on the eastern side. The distance from the Mangapai landing to the eastern route is about ten miles on the main Waikiekie-Mangapai Road, and to the western about sixteen miles to the same place on the same road. The cost of carting from Mangapai to Waikiekie is £1 to £1 10s. per ton—a distance of fourteen miles.

3. *Mr. Evans.*] Where is the largest population: on the eastern or the western route?—In this district the greatest population would be on the western route, but there is very little difference.

4. On the eastern side of the eastern route or the western side of the western route, which has the largest population?—The western side. The greatest population is in between.

5. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] How long have you been storekeeping?—Five or six years. Before that I was farming in this district.

6. How far do you travel west with your stores?—Five or six miles, sometimes seven, into the bush.

7. *Mr. Steadman.*] Do you not think that the lands to the east want railway assistance?—I think the lands to the east would get it if there was a connection made with Whangarei.

8. Would that effect the lands at Ruarangi?—Yes, I think so.

9. How far would they be from the junction?—I think there would probably be a station at Ruarangi.

10. Do you know if there is any road from Waipu along this way?—Yes, there is a road from Millbrook.

11. Do you know that the Waipu settlers have great trouble in getting away their produce?—Yes.

12. Do you not think they would require railway connection?—Yes.
13. East or west does not affect you as regards distance?—A large part of the district lies to the west.
14. The centre of the district lies between the forks?—I think in the part of the country I am acquainted with the railway would serve the greatest area if it went to the west.
15. Do you not think that Waipu should have some consideration?—The railway will not make much difference to them going out by Millbrook. I think the Waipu settlers would come in here.
16. Do you not know that they are hoping to make a connection with the railway by the eastern route?—Not so far north as this, I think.
17. Do you think they should go all the extra distance from Mareretu to Waikiekie?—I think they would be served best by the railway nearer Maungaturoto.
18. Do you know there is a range of hills in between?—There is a road through between the Gorge Road and Waipu.
19. Is it a driving road?—I cannot say.
20. Do you attribute the lack of settlement on the west solely to not having communication by railway?—I do not think I could account for it altogether in that way.
21. They have a good line of communication by the Wairoa River?—It is a long way to the Wairoa River, and not a very good road. It would be twenty miles from here by road.
22. How far would it be from Omano to the Wairoa River?—I cannot say.
23. Is not the whole of that estate within six miles of the river?—I cannot say.
24. Would you be surprised to know it is not four miles?—I have not studied it at all.

MICHAEL HENRY MASON examined. (No. 56.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a settler at Waikiekie, where I have resided for forty-four years. I hold about 500 acres of land, consisting of Crown lease and school reserve and freehold.
2. Will you make a statement to the Commission relating to the matters we are considering?—I advocate the western route. I desire to speak on the subject of ballast. My place is a very short way from a proposed station on the western route. On my property there is a very great ballast-deposit of limestone. You can get a 15 ft. face by 2 chains wide to start with. It rises very sharply, and spreads a quarter of a mile by half a mile, and I think it is all solid rock.
3. How far is this pit from the nearest part of the railway on the proposed western route?—Half a mile over a river-flat.
4. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] When you speak of a river-flat, what river are you referring to?—The Waiwakangaro River.
5. Have you ever travelled from this district to Wairoa?—No.
6. Is there not a road from Omano to the Wairoa River?—Not that I know of.
7. When people desire to deal with the river, do they prefer to go a long way up or to go down?—We generally go right across to the river.
8. A connection between the Wairoa River and Omano would not serve you any purpose?—No.
9. *Mr. Steadman.*] How long have you held your land?—I have held the freehold for about twenty-two years. I have about 220 acres of freehold.
10. What stock do you carry?—I have forty-two head of cattle at present and six or seven horses.
11. How much of it is in grass?—About 200 acres.
12. Is it good limestone land?—Most of it is limestone formation; a little of it is sandstone.
13. What is the area of your leasehold?—147 acres of school reserve and 33 acres of Crown lease. I have had the Crown lease for two years, and the other for twelve years.
14. What is on the Crown lease?—Half of it is in grass, and I have the same cattle there as I have on the freehold.
15. You are connected with the dairy factory here, I believe: what is the greatest number of suppliers the factory has had?—We never had more than twenty-four until this last year, when we got three or four additional suppliers.
16. *The Chairman.*] How many cows did the factory start with?—I think, about 700.
17. You are dairying with your cows?—Yes.

ROBERT TAYLOR examined. (No. 57.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a dairy-farmer, residing at Mareretu. I have been in the north for twenty years. I hold 180 acres, of which 66 acres are occupation with right of purchase, 33 acres freehold, and 76 acres education reserve.
2. Will you make a statement to the Commission?—I am in favour of the western route, as I consider it will benefit Waikiekie or the immediate neighbourhood as a whole. The reason I advocate the western route is that the quality of the land on it is superior to that on the eastern route, and would carry a larger population if opened up by the railway. I consider the district is not going ahead because of the lack of proper roads. The cost of bringing goods in is so great that it takes all the profit away from what one is working at. A previous witness was asked a question about the road from Mareretu to Waipu. From the proposed Mareretu Station on the main line below the Gap to Waipu central there is a good graded road, which would connect

Waipu fairly well with the line. That road has been graded for some time, and there has been communication through that way. It is a good road, and the distance is about thirteen miles. I should say that that would be the road for the Waipu settlers. It was put in by the Public Works Department and Mareretu Road Board for the settlers to get their goods to the boats.

3. *Mr. Evans.*] Which line of route carries the population—east or west?—I consider they are about equal so far as that part is concerned.

4. How would you deal with the Maori reserves on the western side?—There are none, I think, in that district.

5. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Have you ever heard any of the Waipu people agitating for the eastern or the western route?—No.

6. Is not the Waipu—Maungaturoto Road an even better graded road than the one you speak of?—Yes, but this one has been graded of late years.

7. That is the road which comes out just below McCarroll's Gap?—Yes.

8. Have you heard the distance given from Waipu to Maungaturoto?—No.

9. Maungaturoto is considerably nearer to Auckland than Mareretu?—Yes.

10. *Mr. Steadman.*] Taking a distance of seven miles on each side of the line going northwards, where does the greatest population lie?—I do not think there is much difference.

11. Drawing a line from the Gap to where the line junctions with Kaikohe, and taking seven miles on each side to Parakao, where does the greatest population lie?—I cannot speak of the population north of here.

12. Are there as many settlers in Maungakaramea as there are in Waikiekie?—I cannot say.

13. You know nothing of the country north of this?—That is so.

14. Was not the Omano land locked up because of the owners being absent from New Zealand?—It may have been.

15. One part of that land was education reserve and another part belonged to absentee owners?—Yes.

16. If that had been Crown land, would it not have been taken up and settled long ago?—I should say so.

17. It has not been kept back altogether because of the railway?—No; but the railway would improve it considerably.

18. What value would the railway put on the land?—It is worth £4 per acre now, and if we had a railway I predict it would be worth £9 per acre at the least.

19. The railway would put £5 per acre on all the land in that district?—I should say it would.

20. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Was Omano not held by the Kauri Timber Company for cutting purposes for many years?—I believe it was.

21. So that was one reason why it was not opened up for settlement?—No doubt that kept it back.

JAMES THOMPSON WALKER examined. (No. 58.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, residing at Maungakaramea, where I have lived for thirty-two years. I hold 180 acres of freehold.

2. Will you make a statement to the Commission?—I am in favour of the eastern route. My reasons are that on the western route leaving Waikiekie it takes up a creek called White's Creek, which has a very slippery formation. The land on the western route is only fit for grazing purposes, being very rough. The land after leaving Waikiekie on the western route for the first thirteen or fourteen miles has only one family resident on it. If there was a station at Tauraroa it would be very little used except for stock. Taking the eastern route, the line goes through better country—more level country suitable for agricultural purposes. For thirteen or fourteen miles—say, to the Tangihua Block or Waikiekie—there are fifty families within about a mile of the proposed line, three schools, three public halls, and three churches. I presume that on the eastern route there would be a station at Tauraroa on Mr. Gunson's property, and the station there would be very useful, and put through a lot of work. When I was at Mangapai last month there were 70 tons of goods for Maungakaramea on the wharf. That quantity was landed in one week. I should also say that there is a station in the Tangihua Block which will be a very important one, being in touch with Maungatapere, Whatitiri, and Poroti. By going on the eastern route the line to connect with Whangarei would be very much shortened. There is also very good ballast in Maungakaramea—scoria ash or surface stone—which could be crushed.

3. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] In what part of Maungakaramea is your farm?—Opposite the township.

4. Were you in Maungakaramea yesterday?—Yes.

5. What is the reason you did not give evidence there?—It was late when I got into the township last night, and the Commission were just about finishing their business.

6. Did any one ask you to give evidence here?—Yes—Mr. Crawford and Mr. Miller.

7. Did any other person who does not live in Maungakaramea ask you to give evidence?—I cannot say there was.

8. Do you not think it is rather a large proportion to give three schools for fifty families?—In that count of fifty families I only included those who are living within one mile of the proposed railway-line.

9. What are the schools?—Maungakaramea and Tangihua Blocks 1 and 2.

10. I presume Maungakaramea School is a full-time school?—Yes.

11. Are the others full-time schools?—They are half-time schools. One is joined on to Maungatapere and the other to Tangiteroria.

12. With reference to those 70 tons of goods coming into Mangapai for Maungakaramea, what was the nature of them?—Basic slag, phosphates, flour, and oats.

13. Is that the usual quantity that lies on the wharf for Maungakaramea?—No, not always.
14. Was it an extraordinary amount?—I expect it was.
15. Supposing I went in another fortnight, how much would I find, do you suppose?—There is always something there.
16. You made a statement as to the country on the west of the Tangihuas being hilly and steep: are there not many hundreds of acres of flats as you approach the Wairoa River and the Mangonui River also?—When you get very close to the river that is so, but that land does not want a railway.
17. There are many hundreds of acres of flat land on the west of the Tangihuas?—No, not hundreds.
18. *Mr. Steadman.*] Why do you say that these flats by the river do not require a railway?—There is water communication right through to the flats.
19. *The Chairman.*] Has any ballast been taken from Maungakaramea Mountain?—Maungakaramea Mountain has never been opened up, but there are scoria-pits all round, which are used for the roads.
20. There is no pit in the mountain?—There is a slip in it which shows scoria ash.

MCCARROLL'S GAP, MONDAY, 1ST MAY, 1911.

ROBERT MCCARROLL examined. (No. 59.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You reside at Mareretu?—I do. I am a farmer, holding 1,200 acres of freehold. I have resided in the north twenty-four years, and I know the whole of the district thoroughly well.

2. Will you make a statement to the Commission giving your views on the various matters which the Commission is inquiring into?—With regard to the question of routes, my own personal idea is that the route for the Main Trunk should be as near the centre of the Island as possible, and for that reason I would be in favour of neither the eastern nor the western branch. Seeing, however, that a railway now exists from Whangarei practically to Kaikohe, another trunk line either east or west would be in competition with it. I do not think that the north is sufficiently developed to run two lines of railway.

3. You advocate the Whangarei connection in preference to either the western or central route?—Yes, in the present state of the country's development. If that line from Whangarei northwards did not exist I certainly would not be in favour of it. As things are, however, it is only a matter of £200,000 to connect the Whangarei line with the main line when the latter reaches here. It is only twenty-five miles of decent country to go through, and that would give a through line from Wellington to Hokianga. There is no question that the western route goes through good land all the way, and will eventually be the most continuously populated part of North Auckland. At present the surveyed routes east and west junction in the Kirikopuni Valley. If either of those lines were eventually made it would be a simple matter to connect the Kaihu line with either. The people south of that on the western line are already served, but not well served, by the Wairoa River. I have seen it suggested that a railway from Ruawai through to the Main Trunk in this neighbourhood would be a good line. That would certainly suit the people south of Kirikopuni better than a connection with the Kaihu line at Kirikopuni. Another short line that has been suggested, and which would please a lot of people on the eastern route, is a short line from Waipu to the vicinity of the Gap. That line could be got in a distance of little over eight miles, and two miles of that line would tap an inexhaustible supply of ballast on Crown land.

4. What is the class of ballast?—The present manager of permanent-way, Mr. Northcote, examined the outcrop, and said it was the best ballast he had ever seen. It would have to be quarried and crushed.

5. *Mr. Coom.*] You know the country on the western side, through Kirikopuni and away up the Mangakahia to Kaikohe?—Yes.

6. Do you consider that good country?—Excellent country.

7. It would carry a good population?—Yes.

8. Do you not think that that country will be opened up quicker and better by a line of railway than by being left in its present condition?—It has been suggested that electric power could be got from Wairua Falls, and if that power is ever developed all that country could be well and cheaply served by a railway to Whangarei, from which place the settlers get all their supplies now.

9. Would not Mangakahia Valley be served by the western route going through it?—Certainly.

10. And it is country worth opening up?—Certainly. There is no settlement there now practically, and a lot of the land is under Native ownership, whilst on the western route the land is held largely in big holdings.

11. Do you suggest that the power from Wairua Falls would be a cheaper method of driving the railway than ordinary steam-power?—I am no authority on such matters, but from what I have read it seems to me that such power would be cheaper than steam. If the present line did not exist from Whangarei to Kaikohe no one would ever dream of taking the railway any way else than up the Mangakahia Valley.

12. Do you know the country north of Hokianga River?—Yes, to Mangonui and Kaitia.
13. Is that good country?—Yes, on the west coast. On the east coast it is worthless.
14. Supposing the present proposed central route was not adopted, these people would be served by the Whangarei-Hokianga line?—Yes.
15. Are you aware that it is something like twenty-five or thirty miles longer route by way of Whangarei than would be the case by the proposed central route?—Yes; and I am also aware that from McCarroll's Gap to Kaikohe is a long way, fifty or sixty miles, by any line, and the present railway to its present terminus has come from Helensville at the rate of one mile per year, so that it would not worry any one living in Hokianga to have to wait for the country to be developed before the line reaches him. That is my reason for advocating the Whangarei connection—namely, that there is no possibility of the line reaching Hokianga in the lifetime of any one living there now.
16. What is the distance to construct between the rail-head and the Gap?—Twenty miles from where the train now starts.
17. And twenty-seven miles to Whangarei?—Yes.
18. So that at the rate of a mile a year it is no concern of any of us when it gets to Whangarei?—That is so; but in the last two years the rate of railway-construction on this line has been four or five times faster than it was previously.
19. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What Native land lies between here and Kirikopuni on the west of the Tangihuas?—Practically none.
20. If the line was making for Whangarei do you not think it would have been just as well to let it go the way it was going originally to the east of Maungaturoto?—No.
21. There was an advantage in bringing the line here?—Yes.
22. Was not it lengthening it?—No; and if the line was going to Whangarei it would have served the whole country better by going several miles away from the original eastern route. I consider that both the original eastern and western routes were in the wrong place.
23. What distance are you from the Mangonui Bridge on the Tokatoka-Mangapai Road?—As the crow flies, I do not suppose it is more than fifteen or sixteen miles, but by road it is between twenty or thirty miles.
24. How far is that bridge from the Wairoa River?—About twenty-five miles.
25. There is about thirty-five miles of extent of country between here and the Wairoa River?—Yes.
26. You say that the northern junction of the two lines is in the Kirikopuni Valley: would you call Kirikopuni beyond Parakao?—There is not much difference between them.
27. If a junction is made at Parakao it is a long way from Kirikopuni?—Yes.
28. In that case do you not think it advisable to construct a railway through that portion of the country?—That is what I said. The ideal route would be through the centre of the country and up the Mangakahia Valley, but under existing circumstances I thought it better to make a connection with Whangarei.
29. Do you think the people to the north would be willing to go twenty-five miles farther for all generations with freight and passengers in order to get the line through by way of Whangarei?—Not for all generations.
30. That would be the effect of taking the Whangarei-Kawakawa line as the main route?—When the centre of the Island is settled there would be more inducement to continue the line from the junction northward.
31. In a country like this the reason for making railways is not so much the obtaining of revenue as the opening-up of undeveloped country?—There is a lot of country in this part of New Zealand which has been opened up for the last fifty years, and there is no sign of a railway.
32. What has been the progress of that country, owing to the want of a railway and roads?—It has been practically stagnant.
33. If you had had a railway twenty years ago, what would have been the condition of this country?—It would undoubtedly have been very different.
34. You seem to advocate that because there is a line from Whangarei northwards it would be better first of all to connect the Gap with Whangarei?—Yes, to give the people north of Kaikohe railway communication with the rest of the North Island.
35. If those people ask for a central line in preference to that connection, what then?—Give it to them.
36. They are quite able to talk for themselves?—Yes.
37. At the Gap here you are ninety-eight miles from Auckland; add twenty-seven miles to that, and how far would it take the line?—In the neighbourhood of Kirikopuni.
38. Would not that be most useful for opening up the country?—It will be very useful.
39. Would that bring Mangakahia within eight or nine miles of the rail-head on the direct route to Auckland?—Mangakahia is a very big district. It would bring Parakao within twelve miles of the line, but there is all to the south and north of that in the valley. Part of the valley is nearer Kaikohe than anywhere else, and another part is nearer to Whangarei. The valley is about thirty miles long.
40. If the Mangakahia people state that they would prefer the line coming within eight miles of them, do you not think they have a fairly reasonable idea of the question?—Certainly. The population in any district will advocate the railway that goes nearest to them. They would be foolish if they did not.
41. How would the settlers within fifteen miles of Kaikohe be connected with a railway at Whangarei?—Only by road.

42. You think it possible to connect Waipu by a fairly level line at a distance of not more than eight miles?—Yes.

43. That connection will be somewhere in this neighbourhood?—Yes.

44. *Mr. Becroft.*] If the State acquired the largest private properties on the western side of the Tangihua Range, what opinion would you hold then as to the relative value of the two lines?—From the point of view of the value of the land, the ultimate population it would carry, and productivity, there is no doubt that the western route is the best.

AUCKLAND, FRIDAY, 5TH MAY, 1911.

FRANCIS MANDER examined. (No. 60.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are member of Parliament for Marsden, and reside at Whangarei?—Yes.

2. Would you like to make a statement to the Commission as to the matter we are inquiring into?—Yes, I shall be very pleased to do so. I understand that one statement was made while the Commission was taking evidence to the effect that the western route from McCarroll's Gap would serve 1,000,000 acres of country. I have a plan here which shows that it is, roughly, about forty miles from McCarroll's Gap to where the two lines meet northward. If you reckon the country to be on the average twenty miles wide between the railway-line and the west coast you will find that there are only 500,000 acres of land in that stretch of territory. It is about seventeen miles from Kirikopuni to the west coast, and a little over twenty miles from McCarroll's Gap to the west coast. Farther north the distance is about equal by either route; so that you can only calculate on 500,000 acres, and about half of that area is served by the Wairoa River and Kaihu Railway.

3. *Mr. Coom.*] I think the witness referred to was Mr. Harding, but he did not mention either east or west?—What I have stated was the impression that was left on the public mind—that 1,000,000 acres would be served by the western deviation. But I can hardly conceive, supposing that that 1,000,000 acres did exist on the western route, that the trade from the Wairoa River will go to the railway at Kirikopuni on its way to Auckland, or that the goods delivered from Auckland to Kirikopuni by rail would go down the river to Dargaville. A point was also made that goods were delivered at Whangarei at 7s. 6d. a ton, and that is correct, or about 8s., including wharfage and other charges. But it would cost to deliver goods at Kirikopuni from Whangarei, over the present bad roads at this time of the year, fully £3 a ton, even if it could be done for that sum. In summer-time it would cost £2 to £2 10s. a ton. In the other direction I think the present charges are about £1 15s. a ton from Auckland, *via* the Wairoa River, to Kirikopuni. There they can deliver goods all the year round, because they have water carriage, and the roads do not affect the matter at all. I thoroughly agree with the engineers who laid off the central route, which is as nearly as possible the best in the interests of the whole community. It has been stated that the western route was the most central route. I do not wish to say anything I cannot substantiate, but I might state that, crossing the river at Kirikopuni, the western line is seventeen miles from the west coast, thirty-three miles from the east coast, and twelve miles from the Kaihu Valley Railway. And seeing that this railway will be used very largely for the carriage of sheep and other stock, as well as for passengers, equal facilities ought to be given to people on each side of the Island to get their stock to the Main Trunk line. I believe that the engineers were absolutely in the right in the first instance in laying out the line, and that they followed the most direct, cheapest, and best route to the far north.

4. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Which line are you referring to?—The one laid out in the first instance.

5. *Mr. Coom.*] You are not referring to Knorpp's line?—It is practically Knorpp's line as far as he went—to Maungatapere on the east. There was no objection from the people on the eastern side of the line to its being deviated from the originally surveyed position nearer to the Tangihua Range, which was the most recent survey. That would have hugged Tangiteroria pretty closely, and the Tangihua Range. It would have gone a considerable distance from the original survey; but when it was proposed to go right to the western side of the range, of course, naturally there was strong objection. I do not know whether it would be in order for me to refer to the petition presented to the House in regard to this railway a year or two ago.

6. *The Chairman.*] I think you would be in order?—Well, a petition was presented to the House from the people on the western side stating that to the east of the present route there were only some nine hundred people, and who would be equally well served by a more central route; and that on the west of the present proposed line there were seven thousand five hundred people, who would be practically prevented from making use of the railway when completed. The point I want to make in that connection is that when the petition was presented the people in the Wairoa advocated the western route, and they included the population of Dargaville and Tangiteroria in the population of the western route, but they only took in a portion of Otamatea County, which goes down to Mangawai, in ascertaining the population on the eastern route.

7. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Do you indorse that?—I do not, and I spoke strongly on the question in the House when the petition was presented. There is another statement in this petition I wish to refer to. It says that "by crossing the deep water of Kaipara Harbour at Young's Point the whole of the lands on both sides of Wairoa River, as well as those settlers on the different estuaries, will be served and brought into immediate railway connection, while the route favoured by the Public Works Department cut all those people off from any benefit by the railway."

8. *The Chairman.*] You say the petitioners were satisfied that taking the railway to Young's Point would suit the whole of the river?—That is what it states. They said that seven thousand five hundred people would be served by that deviation, and now they are asking for another deviation to prove that what they stated in the first case to be correct they themselves did not believe. The petition proceeds to say that "the line favoured by the Public Works Department passes over extremely bad country, liable to slips, and involves the construction of two tunnels." As to the statement of a population of seven thousand five hundred, which comprises the whole population of Hobson County, being served by the western line, and only nine hundred being affected on the eastern side, I take strong exception to it, because it is not correct.

The Chairman: I think you are now going beyond the scope of the Commission, which starts at McCarroll's Gap.

9. *Mr. Coom.*] Is Young's Point north or south of McCarroll's Gap?—South.

The Chairman: I think the matter is beyond the scope of this Commission.

Mr. Steadman: Would Mr. Mander's statement not be further evidence of whether the petitioners were in the right in regard to taking the line to Kirikopuni?

Witness: That is what I want to bring out. They are asking for another deviation now to Kirikopuni to tap the same river. I think I have shown that the present route is not a central one, but that the line laid out by the engineers was much more central. The people on the east had no objection to going three or four miles towards the Wairoa, as long as the line did not go to the west of the Tangihuas, and I repeat that the western route to Kirikopuni is not central. If the line goes to the west of the Tangihuas all the trade from the east of the range will go to Whangarei, and therefore in that respect I am speaking against the interests of Whangarei; but I believe that a Main Trunk railway should be put down in the interests of the whole community, and not for the benefit of any particular section. The densest population is going to be in the area above Hobson and Whangarei Counties, in the Bay of Islands Electorate, in the future. You do not want to handicap the people in that district in order to benefit the people who are already a hundred miles nearer to a market. If this line had been left to the engineers to settle, and had been carried out as they laid it down, it would have been taken to the north in the quickest way, and would have saved this country from £100,000 to £150,000. I wish to support my statements regarding the population to be served to the east and west of the line by figures taken from the census of 1906. My figures have never been refuted. The Year-book shows that the population is very much greater on the eastern side than on the west. Sheep predominate on the west. The population on the west five years ago in Hobson County was 6,306. In Otamatea West (I deduct a thousand for the population extending to Mangawai) there were 2,328 persons, making a total of 8,634. On the east the population of Whangarei County was 10,381, and adding the thousand I subtracted above to the eastern side the total is 11,381. Natives are included in both cases. In cattle Hobson and Otamatea West Counties had 34,348, while the number in Whangarei County and Otamatea East was 46,046. Sheep on the eastern side numbered 26,716, and in Otamatea East 6,422, making a total of 33,138. Horses—Whangarei, 5,284; Otamatea East, 217: total, 5,501. Sheep on the western side numbered 71,473; Hobson County, 30,580; and Otamatea West, 40,893. Horses—Hobson County, 2,256; Otamatea West, 2,000: making a total of 4,256. Sheep are greater on the western side at present, but in every other respect the eastern side is the greater. And I wish to say that nearly all the cattle coming from the far north beyond the Hokianga River have to head the waters of the Hokianga and come round them, and they are going to be benefited more by the eastern route at the present time. Of course, that will not apply when the railway gets up farther north to Kaikohe. I wish to refer to the lands on the western side. A good deal has been said about the bad lands on the eastern side. I do not wish for one moment to disparage the lands on either side. I think altogether they are pretty well equal. There is good land on both sides and bad land on both sides. But the land on the western side of the Tangihua Ranges, especially north of Kirikopuni, at the crossing of the Wairoa River, is not at all suitable for settlement in small areas except a very small proportion of it. It is broken country, and will necessarily have to be held in large areas. It is also badly watered country. I do not know that from personal experience, but I have heard numbers of men who have travelled through that country state that it was the worst country they had travelled through to get a drink for their horses in the summer-time. Therefore it is not suitable for close settlement, and at the present time the most of it is held in large areas. Of course, south of that point it is no doubt more suitable for close settlement—that is, some portions of it. The larger portion of the country south of the river is more suitable for close settlement. But on the eastern side of the range the country is adapted for small settlement, and the most of it is held in small holdings at the present time. Taking a point a little past McCarroll's Gap going north to Mangakahia, on the eastern side of the Tangihua Ranges, there is a very large area of country that you can get the plough into. My opinion is that the land you can get the plough into, however poor it may be considered at the present time, is going to be the land of the future, so far as the north is concerned, because if you get a railway through that country and give the people facilities for getting cheap manure every inch of the land will be brought under cultivation, and it will be far better land thirty years hence than the broken country you cannot get the plough into. I speak from practical experience. I have been in the north thirty years, and I have seen a good deal of it—for instance, I know that at Paparoa thirty or forty years ago there was the most beautiful grass country I ever saw—most magnificent country for grass. But going through it to-day you see the hilltops all covered with fern where you cannot get the plough into the ground easily. A large proportion of the land on the western side is broken country, and that country in the future is not going to be as good land as the land you can get the plough into and turn up and manure. I think the lands that are considered poor to-day are the lands the Government ought to consider and try to make rich by putting the railway through them. The Government should not run the railway

away from the poor lands to catch a bit of land that is considered good to-day. You have only to take the case of the land south of Auckland from Manurewa to Hamilton. In the early days, with the exception of a small patch at Pukekohe, it was not considered worth fencing in. But that land is now fetching from £20 to £30 per acre, because the people have got cheap manure and have enriched the land. The same will happen in the north. There is another point I wish to make, too, so far as the Wairoa side is concerned. I have not got the *Gazette* by me, but I looked it up when I gave evidence before the Committee in Wellington, and I found that a very large amount of goods came from the south into the Wairoa at a freight of about 10s. per ton. I think fourteen thousand pounds' worth of stuff came in the year before I gave evidence. And, of course, a good deal came from Sydney and Melbourne. That, no doubt, was in consequence of the timber-mills carrying on business and giving return freights. Whether that will continue in the future may be disputed; but I think it will, because I understand a couple of steamers are being constructed now for that purpose. These goods can be delivered at Tangiteroria or at Kirikopuni, or wherever the railway crosses the river, for about 15s. a ton, and the railway could not possibly compete against them. Even if the freight cost another 10s. a ton the railway could not compete against them. My opinion all along, and I have expressed it pretty fully before, is that the Main Trunk Railway should not touch the waterways on either side. It should give equal facilities for the people on both sides, and should go as direct and straight north as possible. I have strong objection personally to any of these waterways being obstructed. The same thing has happened at Whangarei, and it is happening now at Maungaturoto.

10. *The Chairman.*] How would that apply so far as these routes is concerned? Does it apply to Kirikopuni?—Yes, it applies to all of them unless the bridge is put high enough or a swing span is put in to allow the trade to go through. I do not think any of these waterways should be blocked. My opinion in regard to the route is this: that the Wairoa from McCarroll's Gap would be much better served by the construction of a branch line, either after the completion of the main line or simultaneously with its construction, from McCarroll's Gap in the direction of the Kaihu Valley Railway, so that the two lines might be connected in the future. It would open up the country much better on the west of the Tangihuas.

11. In other words, you think the Kaihu-Dargaville Railway system should be linked up with the Main Trunk line at McCarroll's Gap?—Yes; and on the eastern side by a connection with Whangarei. I think that is inevitable. Of course, I believe that the line originally laid out by the engineers to the east of the Tangihuas would be considerably cheaper. I am pretty well sure it would cost £100,000, more or less, to construct than the route at present laid out. If you make a railway cost more money the interest on that money has to come out of the pockets of the settlers, and if that railway is going to cost £100,000 more to construct than it should do it means another £3,000 will have to come out of the pockets of the people to make up for it. That is not a right principle. I wish to say, in conclusion, I am quite satisfied that if the engineers had been left alone, and if influence had not been brought to bear on them, they would have laid that railway down in the best and cheapest possible way for this country. I do not say that as a reflection on the engineers, but to their credit. They were not left alone, unfortunately.

12. *Mr. Evans.*] You know this country pretty well?—Thoroughly well.

13. Do you know the western country?—I know the most of it. I have never been up the Kirikopuni Valley. I have been to the western side of the Tangihua Ranges.

14. You have a good idea of the country to the west: what sheep to the acre do you think it will carry at the present time?—Some of it will carry three or four sheep to the acre, and some not more than one.

15. When it is not cleared what will it carry?—It will not carry any under bush.

16. Do you think the western side will carry more sheep than yours?—I think the western side is more adapted to sheep than ours. The eastern side is more adapted to dairying.

17. I suppose you are aware that a good deal of the country is still covered with scrub and timber, and is not carrying anything at the present time?—That is so. That applies to both sides.

18. What do you reckon it will cost to clear the timber country and put it in grass fit for sheep?—£2 10s. per acre. That will not include fencing.

19. With fencing?—It will cost from £3 to £3 10s., I suppose.

20. You think it can be done for that?—It all depends on the burns you get. There are a lot of contingencies. Sometimes you may lose your burn for a year or two, and then it is a very expensive matter; but under ordinary circumstances you may put the cost at from £3 to £3 10s.

21. What do you think is a fair estimate of the sheep that country will carry when it is cleared?—A sheep and a half to two sheep, not more. It may do more for the first few years, but it will come down to that average. There are some very rich patches, but no quantity of them.

22. Would you be surprised to hear that some of that country carries ten sheep to the acre?—I would not care to buy it at that estimate. I heard of land at Whakatane carrying ten sheep to the acre, but there is no land on the Wairoa side equal to that.

23. At the present time the fern and bush land would not carry anything?—No, except that it is a good run for cattle in the winter.

24. Have you any idea of the amount of Maori land there is in this country to the west?—I do not know, but there is a good deal.

25. Have you any idea of what large blocks the syndicates hold?—I know there are some very large blocks held over there. I am speaking of the western side.

26. *Mr. Bonayne.*] You said the freight from Auckland to Kirikopuni was about £1 15s. per ton, and that the roads in that direction were good, with the consequence that the settlers

would receive their goods at the same rate all the year round: have you any knowledge of the roads there?—I referred to the water communication. I did not refer to the roads at all.

27. Did you mean that the settlers inland would be at a disadvantage on the eastern side as compared with the western side?—No. Both are in the same position inland away from the river.

28. The land on the eastern route is just as good as the land on the western?—I think it would average just as good.

29. I take it you mean that the large areas of gum lands on the eastern side, which possibly may not be so good as the land on the western side at the present time, are ploughable, and may be brought into profitable cultivation in the future?—Yes, but there are large areas of gum lands on both sides.

30. *Mr. Coom.*] In one part of your evidence you contended that the central route is to be preferred to a Whangarei connection?—For opening up the country and as a Main Trunk railway certainly, because you will open up the centre of the country.

31. But you suggest that the Whangarei connection should be ultimately made?—Yes, or simultaneously with the present construction.

32. You then say that the western route at Kirikopuni is seventeen miles from the west coast, twelve miles from the Kaihu Valley Railway, and thirty-three miles from the east coast?—Yes.

33. Is not the east coast served by the Whangarei-Kawakawa Railway and by Whangarei Port?—Yes, just as the other side is served by the Wairoa River and the Kaihu Valley Railway.

34. If the Main Trunk was somewhere near Waikiekie, and a branch line was made from Maungakarama to Whangarei, would not that serve the eastern part of the Tangihuas?—I think it would, but it would not serve the people in the far north in the future as they should be served.

35. You speak of the necessity of the Main Trunk following the shortest route without deviation?—Yes.

36. And on that ground you argue that the eastern route is the one to be adopted?—Yes.

37. Do you know how much shorter it is than the western route?—I cannot say.

38. Do you think there is a mile of difference?—I would not like to say.

39. If there was a mile of difference, would that be material to the people in the north?—No.

40. You gave us some statistics as to the population and the number of cattle, sheep, and so on: have you any idea of the increase or decrease on the western or eastern sides as shown since that time you quoted?—No, but I believe it will be seen there is a greater increase on the eastern side when the statistics are published.

41. You know the land on the west of the Tangihuas?—Yes.

42. Is there more land to be opened up there than on the east?—I think there is, but of course it will be held in large areas, mostly because it is more suitable for that.

43. You say that the land on the west of the Tangihuas, especially north of Kirikopuni, is not suitable for settlement in small areas?—Not all of it.

44. How far north does that extend?—Right to the Hokianga waters, with the exception of some land at Kaikohe and some flats in the gullies; but the most of that country is broken.

45. When you come to six or seven miles north of the Tangihuas that will apply to the eastern as well as the western route, because the two lines junction somewhere about Parakao?—Yes.

46. Then there is only the land between Kirikopuni and about seven or eight miles north which will be affected by the western route and not by the eastern route?—That is so.

47. So there is only a small area of land not suitable for closer settlement on the western route?—There are considerable portions north of Kirikopuni Crossing, but I think that south of Kirikopuni there is a larger area suitable for small settlements than there is north.

48. Are you not aware that the river-flats are good country?—Yes.

49. That will be served by the western route better than by the eastern route?—It will be served by the Wairoa River.

50. Will it not be served by the western route in preference to the eastern?—Not all of it. It is inconceivable to me that the trade will ever come up the Wairoa River to feed the railway. They have such beautiful water communication with Helensville. They will drive stock to the railway only.

51. And the people would not travel by railway: you think they would rather go by boat?—I think so, because the river is not an open sea-way, and those in close proximity to the river will use it.

52. You think they will change at Helensville into the railway?—Yes. In my opinion, when the railway gets through the steamers will come into competition with it. They will reduce the fares, and try to run against the railway.

53. Do you know what interest the steamers are paying on their capital to-day?—I do not.

54. Do you know if they have paid any interest in the last twenty years?—I do not think they have paid much.

55. Do you know if they have paid any?—According to Mr. Mitchelson they have not. But the population will probably increase, and other people will come in and manage the companies better.

56. You say you object to the big waterways being obstructed by bridges?—Yes.

57. At what height do you think it would be necessary to erect the bridge at the Kirikopuni crossing of the Wairoa River?—I suppose the height of a scow's mast—30 ft., perhaps.

58. You think it is necessary that scows should go beyond Kirikopuni?—I think so. It is necessary that all the waterways should be kept open, because we do not know what is going to happen in the future.

59. You think 30 ft. in height would be sufficient?—I think so.

60. You said very definitely that if the line was constructed as originally laid out it would be cheaper by £100,000?—I was speaking of the whole line, not the deviation from McCarroll's Gap. They deviated about two miles out of their course to go to McCarroll's Gap to start with,

61. Your statement does not apply to the line north of McCarroll's Gap, which the Commissioners are now considering?—No, my statement covered the whole line from Kaiwaka northwards.

62. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] You do not think it would be satisfactory to the country to have the main line made by connecting with Whangarei from McCarroll's Gap?—If I was living in the north I would object to going round all that distance for all time.

63. You are also of opinion, no doubt, that the time must come, and before very long, when Whangarei will be connected with the Main Trunk?—I think it will have to come.

64. When that time does come, where do you think that Whangarei line will cross the Mangapai—Maungakaramea Road?—The line should follow approximately Knorpp's survey to Whangarei.

65. Do you know where Knorpp's line crosses the Mangapai Road?—I cannot say positively—I have not got the plans with me—but I think it is somewhere between Waikiekie and Mangapai.

66. Can you give an estimate of the distance to Whangarei from where the line will cross near Mangapai?—I cannot give you an estimate.

67. Providing Whangarei has a connection with the Main Trunk line, which will come within, say, half a dozen miles of Maungakaramea, do you think it ought to pay?—It is not Maungakaramea alone we have to consider, but Mangakahia and all the country as a whole.

68. Presuming you have a Whangarei branch line connecting with the Main Trunk, which we are informed must go near Maungakaramea, would you advocate the central line also running from Maungakaramea to the east of the Tangihuas?—It ought to continue on and go straight through the centre of the peninsula to the far north. There should be no deviation of the Main Trunk Railway to accommodate a section of people a hundred miles nearer the market than the people of the far north. The people of the far north need the most consideration.

69. Can you give us any reason why several witnesses at Whangarei, such as Mr. J. G. Mackenzie, Mr. Mackesy, Mr. Miller, Mr. Mulhern, and others I think, pronounced themselves in favour of the Main Trunk Railway going to the west of the Tangihua Range?—I cannot be responsible for other people's opinions. I express my own.

70. With reference to these big estates on the west of the Tangihuas, can you name any of them?—Harding and Co. have a very large estate.

71. What estate is there going north of Kirikopuni?—Mr. Mitchelson is my authority for saying that one of the Hardings has six miles of country there.

72. Do you know that the Karaka Estate has been all cut up, and that he does not own it now?—I do not know that.

73. That is one of the large blocks you refer to, I presume?—Yes. Do you not remember Mr. Poole stating in the House that he went up the Wairoa River, and asked who the land belonged to, and was told "Harding, Harding," all the way up.

74. I am taking your own statement that these large estates exist north of Kirikopuni. If you had said south of Kirikopuni I would not have differed with you. We also have it in evidence that 7,000 acres of the Mangaru Block has also been sold by Mr. Harding?—I did not understand that. The names given to me as owners of large estates west of the range are Bailey, Dryden, Riddell, and the three Hardings. And I believe Mr. Niccol, of Auckland, owns a large block too.

75. Then, your large estates are here, there, or anywhere?—These I refer to are on the western route.

76. Have you heard Mr. Cuddie, the Chief Dairy Commissioner, say, or seen the statements he has made, in reference to the suitability of the lands on the Wairoa side for dairying?—No.

77. Would you be surprised to hear he has said they will make the best dairying district in the whole Dominion?—Some of the land may.

78. Mr. Cuddie was speaking generally of the whole district?—I think, then, he is wrong.

79. You say you have been through the land on the west of the Tangihuas?—Yes.

80. Have you been through the land that lies between the range and the river?—Some of it, but not all.

81. How did you travel there?—I got through between the mountains by Maungakaramea and through to Riddell's country. I have been to Birch's, on the other side.

82. Have you heard any single person object to a bridge at Kirikopuni on account of the obstruction to the river?—Yes, I saw an account of an objection in the paper the other day.

83. Do you know how far the Kirikopuni Bridge would be from the Tangiteroria Road bridge?—About four miles, roughly.

84. And if the railway-bridge is as high as the Tangiteroria Bridge, would there be any obstruction?—When you get up above Tangiteroria the water is getting shallower, and you cannot get big vessels up.

85. We have the Harbourmaster's evidence that there is 18 ft. at Kirikopuni, and that below there, there is a shallow patch which at low water is only covered by 6 ft. of water?—I did not know that, but you could easily remove that patch in case of emergencies.

86. Can you say anything as to the progress that has taken place in the western district in the last few years?—I think there has been considerable progress in the last few years since the timber has been cut out.

87. Can you name any other district in the north that has made such progress as the western district?—I think the eastern side has made equal progress since the creameries started.

88. What is the relative increase?—Now you are asking me something I have not gone into.

89. *Mr. Becroft.*] In your suggestions you mentioned the Otamatea, and especially the eastern Otamatea: do you not consider that is too far south for the Commission to consider?—I only mentioned that in order to show the population.

90. Then you made mention of the importation of goods into the Kaipara Harbour?—Yes.

91. Do you not consider that the importation of goods brought about by the timber industry is likely in the near future to decline very much, whereas the railway will be there for all time?—I am informed that there are a couple of steamers being constructed now to run in that trade, and if that is true they will come into competition with the railway. I believe they can deliver stuff from the south by steamer cheaper than they can deliver it from Auckland by rail.

92. Then, you object to the railway crossing tidal waters?—I do.

93. Are you aware that tidal waters act as great feeders to the railway up and down?—Sometimes they do.

94. Do you not think it is advisable for a railway to tap tidal waters which will help the settlers to get their produce to the stations?—Yes, but it will tap the Kaipara waters four times before you get to this point.

95. It operates both ways—on the traffic going down the river as well as up?—Not very much at Kirikopuni.

96. We have it in evidence that they will not use it very much south of Dargaville, but I am assuming that north of Kirikopuni they will use the railway?—Yes, north of that point they will. They will use the railway there, no matter which route it went.

97. *Mr. Steadman.*] Do you know the land between the Wairoa River and the west coast?—Yes.

98. What kind of land is that?—The majority is some of the poorest north of Auckland. There are good patches along the river-bank, but when you get off them there is very poor country right down to the heads—that is, below Dargaville. Above Dargaville it is better; there is some very good country there.

99. Can you say where trade is gravitating to on the Wairoa River—whether to the east or to the west of the river. Do you know whether the settlements on the east or the west of the river are increasing?—I do not think the townships on the east of the river are improving at all. On the western side of the river I think the townships will continue for some time, on account of the milling industry.

100. Would you say Aratapu and Te Kopuru are improving?—No, they are going back, because the timber is getting scarce. There is no room for more than one permanent town on that river.

101. Where will that be?—I think Dargaville will be the town in the future.

102. Or where the railway crosses the river?—No doubt there will be an attempt to form a township at that point, but I think the principal town on the Wairoa River will be Dargaville.

103. Do you know the country in the Lower Mangakahia?—Yes.

104. What kind of country is that?—It is very good country. Some of it is broken.

105. How would that be served by the western route?—It would not serve it very well, except for stock.

106. It would cut that country off from the Main Trunk altogether?—Largely so.

107. How many miles is it from the port to Moengawahine and Puroa?—About sixteen or eighteen miles.

108. And the lower Mangakahia?—About twenty-two to twenty-four miles.

109. *The Chairman.*] You suggest that the Main Trunk line should go by the eastern route, and that the connection with Dargaville—Kaihu Railway should be made as direct as possible from McCarroll's Gap?—Yes.

110. Supposing that the line went by the western route, where would you advocate a connection being made with Whangarei?—It will be a difficult and very expensive matter if you go to the west of the mountains, because you have difficult and ugly country to get through.

111. Supposing the line went by the western route, would you advocate a connection with Whangarei by Māreretu?—That would be a very expensive connection.

112. Would you recommend it, or do you think it is too expensive to recommend?—I have no opinion to offer.

113. What would you recommend, supposing the line went by the west?—The best possible connection that can be got with Whangarei.

114. Where would that be?—I do not know. It would take an engineer to pick that out.

115. You said that the four northern counties will carry the largest population eventually?—Yes.

116. Do you base that statement on the class of land up there?—Yes.

117. Have you been through there?—Yes.

118. Where does the best land lie?—You have got a splendid area of good country right through from the other side of Kohukohu. You have a large area of splendid country around Kaikohe, and then a large area of country on the other side of Kaikohe and Kohukohu right through to the Victoria Valley and Kaitaia.

119. This class of land is going to carry the population?—Yes. Then, there is a lot of beautiful-lying country to the east of Waimate. It is considered poor, but you can get the plough into it, and it will make good country.

120. How much of this western land do you know? You say you have not been to Kirikopuni?—I have been up and down the river several times.

121. Have you been north of the river on the western route to Parakao?—No, I have not been up the Kirikopuni Valley.

122. Have you been south of the Tangihuas? Have you seen the country from Kirikopuni south to Waikiekie?—No, that is a very short space

123. Have your travels been confined to the river itself to Tangiteroria, and then up the road to Whangarei?—No, I have been all round to Birch's.

124. Where is Birch's?—I do not know the exact locality, but it is west of Waikiekie. I have been to Tokatoka.

125. I am speaking of the west of Waikiekie?—I have been right through to Riddell's property to the Mangakahia Ranges.

126. Then, you have travelled from Waikiekie through to Tangiteroria?—Not by the route of the railway, but through the mountains. I have been through the country and seen it.

127. Is that country a good class of land?—Yes, very fair country.

128. Is it capable of carrying a population?—I think it will carry a considerable population, but most of it is suitable for large holdings.

129. Will it not do for dairying?—Yes, the undulating country will, but a lot of it is broken.

130. Will not the hills do for dairying?—A lot of it is too broken, and you cannot profitably work it for dairying.

131. Do you know what Riddell puts off his place?—I know he puts a large quantity.

132. Do you know he puts off two hundred head of fat cattle regularly every year?—I believe he does.

133. Does that not show it is cattle country?—Yes, but in this bush country there is a tremendous lot of feed for the first few years, and then it gradually goes back.

134. Do you not think the mountain land will be good enough for dairying eventually?—You cannot cultivate it intensely enough for dairying. It will go back in spite of you. If you can get the plough into it it will be good enough.

135. What evidence have you in regard to the land going back?—The evidence of all the lands I have seen in the north. It is the same class of country. As I said, Paparoa was as good country as one could possibly see thirty years ago, but it has gone back now: and I know that other parts of the country are going back.

136. What is the nature of the country at Paparoa?—Sandstone.

137. It is not limestone country up Waikiekie way?—It is the same class of country as Paparoa.

138. Is that not sandstone country?—Yes; I am positive it will not maintain its present feeding-capacity. It will do so for ten or a dozen years. That is my opinion.

139. How far is Tangiteroria from Kirikopuni?—About four or five miles.

140. And Tangiteroria is the head of the navigable water for big boats?—Yes.

141. Do you know the belt of gum land about Poroti?—Yes.

142. Supposing a line were sent up about midway between the eastern and western routes to under the Tangihua Mountains, and from there a branch line was sent through Maungakaramea to Whangarei, would that not tap all the good country on the east coast?—No.

143. What good country on the east coast would it not tap?—All the country at Puroa, Moengawahine, the lower Mangakahia, Ripinui, Maramaku, and Ripiwai.

144. Where is Moengawahine?—Between Ruatangata and the Mangakahia River.

145. How far is Puroa from Ramarama?—I could not say.

146. Is it not only two or three hours' ride?—I suppose it is.

147. Does not the railway to Whangarei, if connected with Auckland, run past Ramarama?—It would not be a great distance away.

148. Is not Puroa only an hour and a half away from the eastern route by the Mangakahia?—Yes, but there would be extra mileage to pay.

149. Is there not in that part only two or three miles difference between the eastern and western route?—It is a tremendous distance round. You would have to go round as far as Whangarei, as far as I know.

150. Is there not only a very little difference between the eastern and western routes at Lower Mangakahia?—There is not a great difference, I suppose.

151. Is it not only about an hour and a half's ride from Ripinui to Hukerenui by a formed road?—I suppose so.

152. Would it not take you five or six hours to connect with the line?—If there were two routes I would drive to the shortest route.

153. Would not the Ripinui settlers have to go by Puroa to get to Mangakahia?—Yes.

154. Is not the outlet to Muramaku through Towai?—That is so.

155. Is not the railway to Towai the established connection with Auckland?—At the present time, but you surely do not want to make the people up there pay extra railage for all time.

156. Would not the Muramaku outlet be above the junction?—I could not say.

157. The road would be the same from McCarroll's up to the base of the Tangihuas, more or less on the eastern side?—If you struck a midway road between the two you would have to go through the Tangihua Ranges.

158. What produce are the Poroti lands capable of growing for sending to Auckland?—Fruit, butter, and almost anything that other lands will grow if properly cultivated. With the use of basic slag all those lands can be made very profitable.

159. The line that you take is north-east by south-west?—Straight across the map.

160. A connection must be made between Whangarei and the Main Trunk line: when that connection is made none of the trade along the Whangarei-Kawakawa line will go on to the Main Trunk line north of Kirikopuni?—I believe that is right, excepting stock.

161. You say you rely upon the opinion of engineers in this matter?—Yes, very largely.

JAMES TROUNSON examined. (No. 61.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—I reside at Northcote.

2. What is your occupation?—I am a timber-merchant and farmer. I formerly resided at Dargaville, where I lived for about twenty years, and before that I lived for about twenty years at Paparua.

3. Would you make a statement to the Commission giving your views on the several matters we are considering?—I have known the northern district for very many years, having traded with Maungakaramea, Waikiekie, Whangarei, and Mangapai—through all the districts affected by the eastern and western routes of the proposed railway. I used to buy fat cattle which were fed on the west of the Tangihuas, but almost without exception the owners of those cattle lived at Waikiekie and Maungakaramea. At the end of the winter, when there are no turnips grown in the Waikato, it was no uncommon thing for cattle fattened on the western side of the Tangihuas to fetch £20 apiece in Auckland. Whilst the people lived on the eastern side of the Tangihua Range they fattened their cattle on the western side. When going through the districts on the eastern side we would go miles and miles without seeing a beast—that is, you would not be able to buy a fat beast on that side. All the stock had to be driven through there to the coast, for there were no roads on the other side. I find that where cattle will do well on rough country they will do better when the country is cleared. Only last year a gentleman who came up there to buy cattle told me he was informed in Auckland that it was no use going there to buy cattle, yet in one week he had bought seven hundred head. The western side has been a kauri-timber district, but there is a large quantity of mixed bush which the settlers could make use of, especially as the kauri is becoming scarce. I have a sample of teraire here which has been used for the outside wall of a building, and the Maori whose house it was in informs me that it is over thirty years since it was put in. It is in a perfectly sound condition, and had never been painted or oiled. Teraire is regarded as a very excellent timber for all purposes that first-class kauri is used for now, such as ceilings and floor-boards, and settlers could make use of the value of that timber whilst clearing their lands. There are hundreds of millions of feet of it in the north. I have orders from Sydney for teraire at a price as good as we used to get for first-class kauri. It would be profitable, and would open up a fine country. There is also matai and rimu and other timbers which cannot be floated.

4. *Mr. Evans.*] You reside in the western district?—Yes, in the Kailu Valley, and I am not at all concerned in the progress of the Main Trunk line by either route.

5. Are you a large landowner?—I have about 6,000 or 7,000 acres of kauri bush land and other land.

6. You think the central route should go to the west of the Tangihua Mountains?—Yes, because of the great proportion of good land.

7. Are you in favour of a branch line from Whangarei to the main line in the direction of Maungakaramea?—I do not see what is the use of it.

8. There is a big population along there, is there not?—Not that I know of. The country is generally poor. There is no timber or many settlers on the route.

9. The railway would improve the value of your land, would it not?—Not in the least.

10. *Mr. Ronayne.*] You have a general knowledge of the land on the eastern and western routes?—Yes.

11. Supposing the railway were taken through the western route, do you think the revenue obtainable would be sufficient to pay working-expenses and interest?—I think so, especially if they could make use of the timber.

12. Supposing it were taken on the eastern route, what would be the position?—The traffic would have to come from the western side, as now. We have to drive our stock through by the eastern side, because we have no roads.

13. You mean that the eastern route would not produce so much revenue as the western route?—Not nearly so much.

14. Your opinion is that the line on the western route is far superior to that on the eastern route?—Yes. I consider that 90 per cent. of the traffic on the railway would come from the western side.

15. Some of the witnesses have stated that a railway connection would be desirable between the Main Trunk and Dargaville: are you in favour of that?—I think it would be possible to connect the Awakino Valley with the Main Trunk.

16. Do you think that that connection should be made as soon as the railway is completed to Kaikohe?—I think it is desirable.

17. Do you think it would pay?—It is good dairying-country, and I think the Government are now opening up the country. I think the connection would pay.

18. Now, with regard to the gum lands. The Commission passed through a portion of your lands and saw the results of your labours in bringing in the gum lands and converting them to good pasture: what is your experience in connection with that?—There is a great difference in gum land. There is some gum land which has sandy soil of which one can make something, but on the pipeclay land very little can be done.

19. The land you were breaking in was land of a sandy description?—Yes. Forest land on which there is not much gum. I have broken up a lot of that land in the last two years. I had kauri bushes right through, and bought more land than I really required, and as soon as I got the timber out I broke up the land, and off the land which I did not think was of much value at that time I sheared five thousand sheep last year.

20. Are there large areas of gum lands on the western route?—Not large areas where this line goes on the western route.

21. Is it capable of being cultivated and put into grass for dairying purposes?—All the land nearly on the western side is suitable for grazing, and could be made use of. It could be made to carry a sheep and a half to the acre.

22. Are there any large areas of gum land on the eastern side?—Yes; but there is a large portion of poor country on the eastern route.

23. Would you describe it as pipeclay land?—Yes.

24. Could it be made to grow *paspalum* grass?—I have seen *paspalum* tried at Te Arai, where there is the poorest land, and in Mangapai, and it is generally a failure on gum land. It might grow gum-trees.

25. Would not such land be suitable for growing fruit?—I do not think so.

26. Previous witnesses have stated that the western route was far more suitable for the raising of sheep than for cattle, owing to its being so broken: is that your opinion?—A lot of that land would be very suitable for dairying purposes, for rearing sheep, and fattening stock generally.

27. A witness also stated that land at Paparoa which ten years ago was of excellent quality had after that time gone back to fern: what is your experience of such land?—The land which has gone back to fern at Paparoa is, generally speaking, not the good land. There is as good land there now as ever there was.

28. Have you had any experience in the growing of *paspalum*?—Yes.

29. Would that grass do for the pipeclay country?—I think so. It does not grow for the first few years, but when it starts it makes a start; it is excellent grass.

30. What is the approximate cost of breaking in gum land for dairying?—A great deal depends on the general character of the land. Some of the land I had to plough cost me £1 an acre for ploughing for turnips, which grew splendidly.

31. *Mr. Steadman.*] What was the total cost of getting the land ready?—Say, £1 10s. per acre.

32. *Mr. Ronayne.*] I was informed in the far north that *teraire* timber was of no use: do you agree with that statement?—The piece of timber I showed you had been in the building for thirty years. Personally I have not used the timber, but I have sent samples to Australia, and I have executed orders for it at a price equal to that paid for first-class kauri in Sydney. I refer to the time when kauri was much lower in price than it is now.

33. Is it a much better timber than the *kahikatea*?—Yes, for the reason that it is not subject to dry rot.

34. Does it lend itself to seasoning readily?—Yes, it makes excellent furniture.

35. How do you send it away?—In fitches and boards of different sizes. Saxon and Binn, large timber-merchants in Sydney, asked me to send them more, and offered me my own price for it. The bush in the Mangakahia Valley and towards Kaikōhe is full of this timber. Kauri now costs over £1 per 100 ft., but this timber can be produced for half that price.

36. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] You have had forty years' experience, I understand, of the country east and west of the Tangihua Range?—Yes.

37. Do you agree with the statement that the land in the west is capable of carrying two sheep to the acre?—It will do that fully. I carry five thousand on 3,000 acres, and the sheep are fat most of the year.

38. Can you give some figures as to your experience many years ago as to the fattening of stock on the western side?—Yes. At one time nobody owned the land, and the settlers at Mangapai, Waikiekie, and Maungakaramea used to send their cattle there and leave them there all the winter. These cattle were equal to any cattle raised on turnips. I took a considerable number around to the Wairoa, and a good many were sold in Auckland for £20 per head.

39. Are those lands now carrying an equal amount of stock to what they then carried?—The land is producing a larger number of stock since it has been cleared than it did many years ago.

40. Would you agree with a previous witness who said that in a few years the carrying-capacity of this land would be lost?—Not at all. In the Mangakahia Valley you will see grass as good as any in the country free from weeds.

41. I believe you are a member of the Land Board?—Yes.

42. Can you tell us what quantity of Native land lies on the western side from McCarroll's Gap to Houto?—I do not think there is a great quantity of Native land there, and most of it is in the hands of private owners. Boxer and Sievwright own some, and there is some Native settlement about Tangiteroria.

43. I believe that on the Land Board you represent the Crown tenants?—I do.

44. Can you describe where the Crown tenants are to be found on the western route, and how they are affected by that route?—Their holdings lie west of the Tangihuas.

45. What settlements are there?—Mangakahia, Mangatu, and Waimatanui.

46. Are there any Crown tenants at Kirikopuni?—No; there are Crown tenants in the Avoca.

47. Are there any on the Girls' High School Reserve?—There are a large number there, but that is on the eastern side of the Wairua River.

48. Is Okahu pretty well occupied by small holdings?—There are several 40-acre sections there, but no Crown tenants.

49. I suppose you have a good knowledge of the large holdings which would be affected by the western route from Waikiekie northwards?—Omano is the largest, and I think Nicol has a fair-sized piece, but as soon as you get outside that you meet with the Crown tenants.

50. If the western district is as good as it is represented, how is it that it has not developed as largely as the eastern district?—It has been held largely by timber companies, and has never been opened up by roads as is the case with the eastern country. While the timber industry was booming in the Wairoa there was no agitation to open up these blocks. The Kauri Timber Company did not want settlers to fire their bushes, but as soon as they got the timber out they sold the land to settlers of means, who are now cutting up the blocks.

51. Would it be correct to say that in that expanse of country from the Wairoa River to the Tangihuas there is not one formed road right through?—I do not think there is. If there is one it has been formed recently. At one time we had to go round through Waipu, Maungaturoto, and Mangapai to get to Wairoa, and then we were only ten or fifteen miles from where the cattle had been running, and we had been driving for a week.

52. Would the country west of the Tangihuas be a payable country to rail as compared with other districts in the Dominion which have been railed?—I have visited nearly all the provinces, and do not know a district where there is such a chance of opening up good land as there is between McCarroll's Gap on the western side and Kaikohe on the northern side. It is the best land I know of in the country.

53. And it is capable of carrying a settler to every 200 acres?—Yes; and it is more suitable for dairying than for sheep.

54. *Mr. Steadman.*] What land are you referring to?—I am relating my own experience on land similar to that opened up by Mr. Harding, where they have had equally good results, down by Kirikopuni and Awakino.

55. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] When you stated that the land is capable of carrying a family to every 200 acres did you not refer to the country between McCarroll's Gap and the west of Kaikohe?—Yes.

56. Then, it is not so hilly and broken as we have been led to understand?—I do not consider it too broken for cattle.

57. Do you consider that the same district is served by the Wairoa River as far as connection with Auckland is concerned?—I do not. The Wairoa River runs fifteen or twenty miles away from a lot of this land, and the railway will serve those places just across the river, and trade will be brought to the railway. I do not suppose the line touches the river anywhere within fifteen or twenty miles except where it crosses it at Kirikopuni.

58. If the Kaihu line were connected with the Main Trunk at Mangakahia or Kaikohe, would that open up much country that would be fit for settlement?—It would: from Taita to the Awakino and right up to the eastern side of Tutamoe, if the line went on to Kaikohe, it would open up a large block of good land.

59. Is it private or Native land?—Most of it is Crown land. Above Mangakahia I think it is Native land, and it is full of teraire.

60. *Mr. Steadman.*] How do you know it is teraire?—I have gone through those bushes myself and have seen that timber there.

61. Where did you get the piece of timber from which you exhibited to-day?—A man gave it to me, and said he had sawn it up in 1880, and I would as soon take his word for it as that of any other man.

62. It was the word of a Maori?—He is a Maori chief of very good repute, and I would take his word for anything.

63. Are you sure it is teraire?—I have shown it to competent judges, and they all agree that it is.

64. Do you not think that if that timber was suitable, as you say, for certain purposes it would have been found out before, and used by the settlers?—It has not been used before because we have had so much kauri timber.

65. Do you know the Whatitiri district?—I cannot locate all the places according to the names.

66. Do you know the Maungatapere district?—I do.

67. What kind of land is it there?—Volcanic land, growing large quantities of teraire.

68. What has it been used for for the last thirty years?—Largely for grazing. Some of the settlers have grown oats.

69. Do you know Maungakamea?—Yes.

70. There are a great number of settlers there, are there not?—Yes.

71. Do you think a railway depending on the carriage of stock only could be made to pay?—I am not going to say that the western route would depend on stock entirely, but I do say that the western side would produce 90 per cent. more than the eastern side.

72. Taking Maungatapere from Maungakamea, Whatitiri, and Maunu, do you say there is any land on the west coast that is as good as the land in those districts?—The latter is an excellent district, and close to Whangarei, but there are lands on the western side equal to Maungatapere, and I would prefer them to it.

73. Do you think that the difference of five miles on either side of a certain line of country weighs with people to the extent you indicate when selecting land?—No; my contention is that there is a big area of land close to the Tangihuas, which is fit for settlement. It is held by the Crawfords, Gunsons, and Babes; but taking the other twenty miles I have spoken of to-day beyond that, the land is comparatively useless. For some of it I would not give 1s. per mile.

74. Do you say that strip of good land extends to only a mile on the eastern side?—I am taking the average at a mile.

75. Do you contend that there is no good land a mile away from the proposed eastern route?—There may be patches, but, generally speaking, these are surrounded by poor land.

76. Do you know the area of the Whatitiri land?—Yes.

77. Do you know that a large area of the good land there was bought by the Government at £3 5s. per acre?—That is good land there, but I am not sure about the area.

78. Would you be surprised to know that it extends for six miles from the eastern route?—I think that piece of land would be better served from the western side than from the eastern.

79. Would not the settlers then have five miles farther to go?—There is a good road.

80. Do you wish me to believe that that land would be served by the railway just as well as if the line were over on that side?—I do not think there is much difference between the two routes as regards distance.

81. Do you say that the settlers in the Mangakahia and Tangowahine Valleys would be better served by the western line than by the eastern?—I am not speaking of a few solitary settlers, but of the public generally.

82. Taking the country from McCarroll's Gap to Parakao, where does the biggest population lie?—On the western side.

83. Is there any settlement to the west of that line as big as Maungakaramea?—A large part of Maungakaramea has but a sparse population.

84. Is there any settlement on the west as big as the one I refer to?—I have not got the statistics here. I know these settlements very well, and I consider the greatest possibilities in regard to settlement are on the western side.

85. I am taking the whole scope of country, and I ask you on which side is the bulk of the population?—Take Whangarei out of it, and you will soon find out.

86. I do not want to go as far as Whangarei, but am taking five miles to the east and five miles to the west of the eastern and western routes, and I ask you where does the bulk of the settlement lie?—I consider the biggest population is on the western side.

87. Are you sure of that?—I am quite sure from my knowledge of the country.

88. Is there any settlement on the west that would compare with Maungakaramea on this side?—Maungakaramea would not carry one-tenth of the number of settlers carried on the same extent of country on the western side.

89. Where are the settlers living on the west?—There are a few settlers living at Maungakaramea partly by roadmaking and gum-digging, but the western side affords the better prospects for a payable line of railway.

90. Has not population a great deal to do with a railway paying?—The Maungakaramea district is pretty well worked out. There are a few small holdings near the mountain, but a little way away to the east you get the poor land.

91. Would it surprise you to know that an Austrian settler is making £150 per year out of half an acre of what you call this poor gum land by growing grapes?—I would doubt it.

92. Which side carries the biggest population?—The people on the eastern side run their stock on the western side, and derive their income from the western side of the range, although they live on the eastern side.

93. Do the Whatitiri settlers run cattle on the western side?—I have not been there for some time, and cannot speak of these solitary places.

94. Do you know in which direction the Tangihua Range lies?—I have not taken the bearings of that range.

95. It lies practically east and west. Is there any scope of good country between the end of that range and the Wairoa River?—The good land lies in the basin between Tangiteroria and right away to the river.

96. Did you say there is no good land north of the Tangihuas?—There are some patches of good land, but the other part of the country has a larger extent of good land. The settlers are doing well on it.

97. Can you tell me one settler who is doing that?—Babe. There is a large family of them.

98. Where does Babe live?—I have been there scores of times. They live in Waikiekie, on the eastern side of the range.

99. The range runs east and west: do they not live to the south of the range?—I know where they live.

100. Will you look at the map. Will you not admit that they live south of the range?—I know they live on the eastern side of the range.

101. *Mr. Evans.*] Is it not a fact that most of the good land and the flat country is held by Maoris and syndicates on the west?—I do not think it is.

102. You know that most of the flat land in the Kaikohe district is held by the Maoris?—I think they hold a good deal of it at the present time, but I believe the Government are now negotiating for the purchase of it.

103. You say the land generally will carry one family to 200 acres: is your area of 6,000 acres composed of such land as that?—My land is not such rich land as these we are speaking of. My land is second class as compared with that.

104. Do you know if there is any Government land obtainable for cash in your district at the present time?—Under the present regulations you can take up Government land under the optional system.

105. There is plenty of land to be obtained that way now?—Yes, every month land is offered all over the province. The favoured tenure is occupation with right of purchase.

GERALD LOFTUS PEACOCKE examined. (No. 62.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You reside in Auckland?—Yes.

2. And you are Chairman of the Auckland Railways League?—Yes. I am here as representing the Auckland Railways League in their views with regard to the carrying-on of the Main Trunk line, but I think it is as well to tell the Commission that I am not simply a Queen Street man who does not know anything about the north. As you know, I travelled all through the north a few years ago with a party of members of Parliament. I specially wished them to see the north, and we travelled right through from Whangarei and Kawakawa to Hokianga, through the Broadwood Settlement to Kaitaia, back to Taheke, thence to Kaikohe, and from there right through the Mangakahia Valley to the head of the Wairoa navigation at Wharekohe. I think that was the old point where, under the original survey, it was supposed

the North Auckland Main Trunk line was going to cross the river. Since then, within recent years, I was with a party from Waikiekie on the western side of the Tangihuas to Tangiteroria. Besides that I have ridden from Helensville to Dargaville on various occasions. I was also editor of the *New Zealand Farmer* for seventeen years. I mention this to show that besides having been brought up on a farm I know something about the values of land for cultivation purposes of various kinds. I have been mixed up with agricultural interests in this part of New Zealand for many years. I have been a member of the executive committee of the Agricultural Association for many years.

3. Will you please make a statement to us on the subject-matter of the Commission?—My chief object in giving evidence was to urge that the construction of the Main Trunk line should not be delayed in favour of a branch line to Whangarei. The policy of our league has always been to urge the construction of main lines before branch lines were undertaken—to finish, as it were, what you might call the arterial system of railways in the country before you went into what might be termed the reticulation side of the question. I want to qualify that statement in regard to the north in regard to this Kaikohe scoria flat connection. Our league thoroughly approved of that, although it was in a sense a branch line, because they recognized that it was only fair to the Hokianga settlers and those further north that they should be given that means of railway communication as far as Whangarei so many years before they would get any railway communication at all if they waited for the Main Trunk line to reach them through the Mangakahia country. But it was not because we thought that that would satisfy the north altogether—that it was quite sufficient, and that therefore the central line or Main Trunk line might be hung up in the meantime—it was only to give these far northern settlers communication as far as Whangarei so much sooner than they would otherwise get it. Generally speaking, I think the central line would assist the development of the Northern Wairoa district more than it could possibly be assisted if the Whangarei line was allowed to become the main line to the north. It would also open up the very large Mangakahia country, a good deal of which is grand country for settlement. I think I heard some evidence given about the broken character of a great deal of it. My experience of the north is that as long as the land is good the mere fact of its being broken does not altogether remove it from opportunities of profitable occupation for grazing purposes—even for dairying purposes. So long as it will carry good grass, broken country is quite available for profitable settlement. But besides that, as you will have seen, no doubt, on your tour, there are a great many valleys and river-flats which in the aggregate amount to a large area of good land, not to speak of the quantity of land there is around Kaikohe and south of Kaikohe, before you get into the Mangakahia country. Then, again, if the Whangarei line were depended on entirely for communication to the north it would leave such a wide extent of country between that line and the west coast which would have no railway communication. Scaling it on the map, as the crow flies, from Towhai to the west coast, drawing a line through the district called Opouteke, which is one of the best parts of the Mangakahia, it is about thirty-eight or forty miles. If you went to Hokianga, towards the Hokianga Heads it would be even farther—forty or fifty miles. Then from Towhai to Opouteke there is a distance of twenty miles, and if you take it from Opouteke to Kaikohe there is a distance of twenty miles again; and then, again, from Waikiekie to Kaikohe, as the crow flies, there would be about forty-four or forty-five miles of country which would be left lamenting as regards railway communication. I meant to state that I am taking Waikiekie as the possible point of divergence. I do not know whether it is proposed to make the junction of the branch line to Whangarei beyond McCarroll's Gap: I assume it might be fixed near Ruarangi, which seems nearest to the Whangarei line, and that is quite close to Waikiekie. I consider there would be a very large tract of country that would be left without facilities for railway communication, and would be left undeveloped for many years—a tract of country which, if opened by railway, would afford opportunities for the profitable settlement of a large population, and which, owing to the timber resources and possible mineral resources as yet undeveloped, and dairying and cattle-raising, and all that, would give a profitable traffic return for any line of railway made through it. There is one thing to be said about the land in the north: although there is a great deal of it which may be called second-class and even third-class land, yet the so-called bad land is capable of profitable cultivation for special purposes, such as fruit-growing, for instance. During the many years I was editor of the *New Zealand Farmer* of course I had special opportunities of judging the kind of land that was specially adapted for fruit-culture, because that was one of our departments, and was a matter in which I took a great interest myself. That particular kind of land is better for orchard-work than the very rich land. And, again, the climate assists. There are many semi-tropical industries in the way of fruit-growing which can be successfully prosecuted in the north. These remarks all bear, of course, on the general warrant we have for putting a railway through the north at all; so that really, except where it is absolutely unworkable because of its mountainous character making it absolutely inaccessible—and that, I submit, is only a small proportion of the country—I think that all the land in the north can be profitably utilized for some purpose or another. There is a far larger area of absolutely first-class land than is generally supposed. Then, again, it is made more profitable by the climate. Early lambs can be raised in the north at a time when they cannot be raised farther south, and that necessitates railway communication, because, as everybody knows who knows anything about fat lambs, there is no class of stock so easily damaged in transit. Quick transit for fat lambs and sheep is everything so far as value in the Auckland market goes. I have heard of cases of fat lambs bred in the north to be brought down here that had to wait at Mangapai and other places for a long time owing to the weather, and by the time they could come down they had depreciated in value at least 50 per cent. on their market value. In saying what I said about the Main Trunk route, I would like to say also that I do not in the least depreciate the value of an ultimate connection between the Main Trunk line and Whangarei.

I think it is one of those branches which will most decidedly have to be made, but I think it is also one of those branches which can wait better than others until the Main Trunk line is either completed or pushed much farther north than it is at present, owing to the fact that when they get to Whangarei they get very cheap and quick water communication with Auckland. I think the freight is 7s. 6d. a ton now. They have shipping facilities at Whangarei and a good service of steamers, so that once they get down to Whangarei they have really got over the great part of the difficulties of transit. At the same time, I would not like it to be thought that we are in any way opposed to that link ultimately.

4. *Mr. Evans.*] Can you tell me what amount of Government land there is on the proposed western route?—I have not the detailed knowledge by me. I understand there is a great deal of Government land on that route. Of course, I have not said a word about the western or eastern route, because it is not the policy of the Railway League to enter into the question of the rival routes at all. We want to leave that to the Government and to the Government engineers. Of course, I have my own individual opinion.

5. You believe the best land is on the west?—I think there is a larger amount of good land to be opened up on the west than on the east. There is a great deal of fine country on the banks of the Wairoa River, on the western side of the Tangihuas, up to Tangiteroria. There are big river-flats of magnificent land, and some of the hill country, I should say, will take grass very well.

6. Are these flats owned by the Government or by Maoris?—The most of it is private land. It was originally the Walton Block, belonging to the Kauri Timber Company.

7. Are you a landowner in that district yourself?—No, I do not own an acre of land north of Auckland.

8. You mentioned that the people on the east had good water communication: have they not also good water communication on the west with the Wairoa and its tributaries?—They have good water communication on the Wairoa from Tangiteroria downwards, but for many of the purposes of settlement or industries which the settlers would have it is not to be compared in usefulness with railway communication, because of its uncertainty and also of its cost so far as stock is concerned.

9. Do you not think that good main roads through the district will also be required before the railway comes in?—My experience is that the railway usually drags roads after it, because the roads are then made in order to feed the railway. Of course, I think roads are better than nothing. In many ways a railway through a new district is more useful than roads, because the settlers have great difficulty in maintaining roads.

10. You have often been through this country?—I have been through it.

11. Did it strike you that there is very little land carrying sheep through that country?—Sheep-farming has not extended to any great extent as yet.

12. Most of the country is still covered with bush and fern?—A very large proportion of it is.

13. Do you consider that this land, if it was cleared of scrub and fern and so on and laid down in grass, would keep two sheep to the acre?—I think a very large proportion of the land is two-sheep-to-the-acre country when brought into grass—much of it more.

14. And the poorer country?—The gum lands I would not consider as sheep country at all, though in time even they can carry sheep and also dairy cattle.

15. With your experience, what do you consider it would cost per acre to put that bush country down in grass?—I should say that to bring the land into absolute carrying-capacity you might spend from £2 10s. to £3 per acre. You might spend more money than that quite profitably if you had it. If I was in an assessment Court I would allow a man £3 per acre as the value of his improvements in regard to any land that was down in good grass.

16. *Mr. Ronayne.*] With reference to branch lines, you mention that it would be desirable later on, when the Main Trunk was completed from McCarroll's Gap, say, to Kaikohe, to have a connection with Whangarei, but you do not say anything about a connection between the Main Trunk line and Dargaville. Would your league be in favour of such a connection?—Oh, yes; that is one reason I meant to have given you why I think the Main Trunk line should be continued—that it would give a far better opportunity for connection with the Kaihu line and the Dargaville district than you could get if the Whangarei line were the Main Trunk line. It is simply a coastal line, and was never intended for the Main Trunk line. The Main Trunk line was always supposed to be somewhere near where the flying survey was made through the Mangakahia, and the settlers have always understood that, and have built up their future plans and hopes on the fact of it going through there. Geographically, it seems to me it would be impossible to make the Whangarei-Kawakawa line the Main Trunk. One thing that ought to be taken into account is the national defence question. That surely would point to the fact that the line should go through the centre of the country as much as possible and as direct as possible to the far north, where there is a cable-station. Of course, these are all considerations of another kind.

17. Is the league of opinion that the Main Trunk line, say, from Auckland to Kaikohe will be a profitable proposition for the Dominion?—Yes, they hold that opinion, and personally I feel absolutely certain it will be. There is quite enough good country to warrant it going through.

18. Can you give the Commission an idea as to the nature of the probable traffic and the sources of revenue, speaking generally?—I think, generally speaking, it will be the produce of the farmers—fruit-growers, dairy-farmers, sheep-growers, and cattle-raisers—proprietors of timber-mills, and possibly coal. I do not know what developments there may be in the mineral resources of that part of the country. Many scientific men tell us that there are all sorts of things there. One can, of course, guess at these, but the main thing will be the produce sent to market by the settlers in the country and the goods they will require from the big centres of population in the south.

18A. You do not think, then, that the railway need suffer any apprehension on account of water competition of the Wairoa and, say, of Russell and Whangarei and Mangapai and Karamea?—For several classes of goods I do not think that water traffic will compete with the railway, because of the injury and depreciation in value of stock and many kinds of goods which have to arrive in the market in a fresh state, especially fruit and anything of that kind, and fat stock. It goes down by punts and all sorts of things, and is very much knocked about.

19. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Presuming that the water transit might come into competition, is it not a fact with almost every port they must come to the railway either first or last in order to get to the port? For instance, if the people at Kaikohe want to go to Russell they must use the railway to get there, and similarly the people north of Whangarei and the people of the Wairoa when they get to Helensville?—Certainly. A great deal of the goods shipped from the water ports will be carried there probably by the railways for a considerable distance in many cases.

20. Take from Tangiteroria right through to McCarroll's Gap, on the north and on the south, and from the Wairoa River and Waikiekie: all between that area there is a very large extent of country which would not be served by the railway or by the water if the line did not go to the west?—Yes, there is. There would be a considerable amount of country there that would not be so well served by the eastern route. Of course, there are no roads on that side, apparently, either. At the same time, I think there is distinctly a larger population on the proposed eastern route than on the western.

21. You state that there is a very large proportion of undeveloped country between the points I have named?—Yes, a very large proportion of good country. Personally, I am inclined to think, if the engineering difficulties are not too great, it would be advisable to go upon the western side of the Tangihuas. That is my own personal opinion.

22. Have you sufficient knowledge to say that within that area there are practically no gum-fields and no Native lands?—I did not see any Native land in that ride we took. All the lands were either private or Government lands. There was not any of the kind of land known as gum lands.

23. *Mr. Becroft.*] Personally, you would recommend railway-construction for the development of the poorer country inasmuch as it would give cheaper freights for manures: would you, as a business proposition, in choosing the route of a railway, build up the poorer country by railway-construction, or would you prefer going through the good country?—I do not think the proper line of railway should be pulled about for the sake of supporting settlers on poor land or settlers upon rich land. I think it should go through the district most likely to give the most profitable return to the railway, and which is most suitable for geographical reasons and for settlement purposes in the future.

24. If the land was undeveloped and not settled, but of good quality, would you think it would be more suitable for a main line of railway?—Yes; I think that should be the general policy.

25. The development of the poor country should not come into the question?—Not until the good country is settled.

26. *Mr. Steadman.*] At what distance from the line do you think the line affects the land or the land affects the line?—As regards cattle, no doubt they will be driven twenty to twenty-five miles to the railway.

27. And goods?—I suppose it affects goods for eight or ten miles.

28. You say your league approved of the junction with Kaikohe as giving the settlers access?—Yes.

29. I suppose your league is aware that nearly all the land around Kaikohe is held by the Natives in large blocks?—Yes, but it was to give the Hokianga settlers a chance to get nearer Auckland.

30. Pursuing that argument, do you not think the line should be pushed on rapidly from Kaikohe towards Kaitaia?—Certainly.

31. You referred to the question of railways for defence purposes: do you not think that Doubtless Bay should be connected with Auckland by constructing sixty miles of railway?—I suppose you mean connecting Doubtless Bay with the Main Trunk when it gets to McCarroll's Gap.

32. Would you be surprised to know that General Godley is very favourable to the idea of getting this connection as soon as possible?—I think it would be very natural. For defence purposes it seems to me that is one of the first features to be looked to.

33. You mentioned Opouteke and Mangakahia: do you know what area, if any, of Crown lands remains to be taken up there?—No.

34. Would you be surprised to hear that the whole of the land that can be opened up there by the Government has been taken up by settlers without waiting for a railway or anything else?—That shows the land is good.

35. If all the first-class land in the Mangakahia and Opouteke is taken up, where is there a large area of land to be taken up?—I said it was there for the railway to go through. I did not say it was to be taken up.

36. I think you said the policy of your league was that the engineers should be left to survey the best route. If you found that a line had been set out by the engineers, and that then an agitation was started to change that line, and on inquiry you found that the proposed deviation was to go through very large blocks of land held by private people, and that these private people were behind the agitation and were getting people to come forward and give evidence, what would you deduce from that?—I would deduce that they had a strong reason for wishing for the deviation.

37. A strong personal interest?—Decidedly; still, it might be the best way after all.

38. Do you not think that water carriage affects this question at all?—Yes.

39. Do you not think that settlers who live ten miles from a good inland water not affected by storms, such as the Wairoa River, have a better road than settlers living on the coast with eighty or ninety miles of rough water to pass over?—They would if the still water brought them right down to their market. Of course, after the Wairoa River, you have the Kaipara Harbour to navigate.

40. Yes, but it is all land-locked?—It can blow pretty hard there.

41. But there is no extent to traverse—not eighty or ninety miles; and have not the settlers who live on the coast a long way to go before they get to their ship?—Very often.

42. And have very rough roads to travel?—Yes.

43. You said Mangapai was not suitable for shipping stock?—No; the boats are so often weather-bound.

JOHN ALEXANDER WILSON examined. (No. 63.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are District Engineer of the Public Works Department for Auckland?—Yes

2. Would you prefer to make a statement to the Commission on this matter?—I think I would. A comparison of the cost of the two routes in question has been made. It has been taken out as exactly as the plans and data available will admit, from actual quantities as far as possible. There is not a very great deal of difference between the costs of the two routes as surveyed and estimated because the country through which they run is not very dissimilar from the point of view of railway-construction. The estimate of the eastern route is as follows: Land, £2,861; fencing, £8,255; grading, £255,381, tunnelling being included in that item; culverts, £15,743; bridges, £40,041; ballast, £40,373; stations, £25,740; rails, sleepers, &c., £49,695; there is besides an allowance for the extra distance to get from the gap at McCarroll's on to the eastern route amounting to £18,063: the total of the estimate for the eastern route is £456,152. That estimate is for the railway on the eastern route from the junction at McCarroll's Gap to the other junction north. The estimate for the western route is as follows: Land, £3,036; fencing, £8,423; grading, including tunnels, £259,409; culverts, £28,688; bridges, £24,380; ballast, £41,635; stations, £27,390; rails, sleepers, &c., £51,181. The total for the western route is £444,142, the difference being about £12,010 in favour of the western route. The total length of the eastern route as shown on the plans is, counting the mileage from Auckland, 136 miles 36 chains 62 links; that is to the point of junction. The total length of the western route as shown on the plans is 136 miles 16 chains 38 links. The western route is thus the shorter by 40 chains. These lengths are allowing for the eastern route, instead of starting two miles to the eastward and something to the northward, starting from McCarroll's Gap, where the western route starts, that being the fixed point to which it has been decided the North Auckland Railway is to be proclaimed. Reducing the estimates to an average rate per mile, it gives £11,784 per mile as the cost of the eastern route and £11,625 per mile as the cost of the western route, the latter being slightly the lower of the two—namely, a difference of £159 per mile. On the eastern route the length of tunnelling is 6,266 ft., and on the western route the length of tunnelling is 4,269 ft., being 1,997 ft. more of tunnelling on the eastern route. The length of bridging on the eastern route is 3,005 ft., including overbridges. On the western route the length of bridging is 1,701 ft., including overbridges, being an excess of bridging on the eastern route over the western route of 1,304 ft. The bridges on the eastern route include one on the Wairua of 150 ft. span and eighteen 20 ft. spans, with concrete piers to carry the main span and pile piers for the others, estimated to cost £7,000. Likewise a bridge over the Mangakahia of one 150 ft. span, two 44 ft. spans, five 33 ft. spans, and one 22 ft. span, of similar construction to the previous bridge, estimated to cost £9,400. The bridges on the western route include a bridge over the Wairoa consisting of one 192 ft. span, one 44 ft. span, three 33 ft. spans, and one 22 ft. span, with concrete piers for the main span and timber piers for the others, estimated to cost £9,000. There are eight station-yards provided for on the eastern route and nine on the western route. Each route shows some slip ground, for which allowances have been made in the estimates. Ballast will be found at McCarroll's Gap by a branch to the Waipu Ranges, about two miles in length, up a good valley. This would serve for many miles for either route. Scoria ballast is obtainable at Maungakaramea. Crystalline limestone is found in the neighbourhood of Waikiekie, which may turn out satisfactorily, and there is a prospect of suitable rock being obtainable from the Tangihuas on the western side if required. The Mangakahia Valley is not likely to prove a good source for metal ballast. The deposits there seem limited. Referring to the question of length, the western route is capable of being shortened between 96½ miles and 100 miles. There is also the question of carrying the western route line through Waikieike, with the object of shortening a branch to Whangarei. This is to be looked into on the ground. There is a further suggestion to shorten the route on the west of the Wairoa River by placing the bridge somewhat higher up stream. There will possibly be some slight improvement to be effected here. On the northern end, after leaving Kirikopuni, a diversion has been pointed out which it is suggested might be an improvement on the present line between Kirikopuni and the Mangakahia Valleys by going to the west of Mangatipa and coming out on the Opouteke. This appears to lengthen the line, though it might improve it otherwise possibly. It is possible that the eastern route is capable of being materially shortened at the southern end between McCarroll's Gap and its crossing with the Tokatoka and Mangapai Roads. At the northern end it is possible to shorten the eastern route, as a reconnaissance survey has shown. This shortening amounts to about one mile, and is obtained by running the eastern route into the western one between the Mangakahia and Kirikopuni Valleys near Titoki. Branches to Whangarei and Dargaville are practicable off either route. The branch to Whangarei would be reasonably easy to construct. The eastern route rises higher than the western route by 76 ft., the greatest height of the former being 388 ft., at Maungakaramea, and

on the latter 312 ft., near Titoki. The line on the east rises 231 ft. from Mangakahia to Maungakarama, with several descending grades *en route*, and 128 ft. on the west from the same point to near Waikiekie. Both lines then descend to the Wairua and Wairoa Rivers respectively—the eastern route gradually, and the western route with several ascending grades to overcome, a descent amounting to 336 ft. on the east and 248 ft. on the west is thus made. The eastern line then rises to the junction at Parakao 73 ft., and the western line passes over a saddle involving a rise of 275 ft. and a descent to the same point. Some investigations as to the relative resistance of the two routes as applied to haulage have been made by taking the three heaviest portions of each line as shown by the grades and curves on the plans, and applying the resistances due to those over the sections in question. The result is that the total of the resistances dealt with shows 14 per cent. in favour of the haulage on the western route, and, taking the steepest grades on each route, it gives a result of 20 per cent. in favour of the haulage on the western route. The western route crosses the Wairoa River below the Tangiteroria Road bridge, touching the river at deep water—namely, about 16 ft. at high water. This I look on as a great advantage. I hand in plans and estimates of the western and eastern routes, and also of the Whangarei-McCarroll's Gap connection (Mr. Knorpp's survey).

3. *Mr. Evans.*] Have you been over the route?—I have been over most of it.

4. *Mr. Steadman.*] When you were talking about the cost of getting ballast out, was anything estimated as regards the cost of hewing the crystalline limestone?—The cost of ballast has been taken at the same rate right through. I am not prepared to say that any limestone will be used. As a matter of fact the cost of ballast has been taken at the present cost of taking ballast from Mount Albert.

Examination adjourned to Monday, the 8th May.

AUCKLAND, SATURDAY, 6TH MAY, 1911.

ERIC CHARLES GOLD SMITH examined. (No. 64.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are Commissioner of Crown Lands and Chief Surveyor for the Auckland Land District?—Yes, and have occupied that position for two years.

2. I understand you have a statement to make to the Commission?—I have not exactly a statement to make, but I can give you particulars of settlement on the western route.

3. Can you give us particulars of the area of land available for settlement?—Within five miles of the western line there are 7,000 acres of Crown lands to be brought under settlement—that is, on the whole line from McCarroll's Gap to Kaikohe. There are 71,300 acres of Crown settlements which this line serves. They are held principally under the occupation-with-right-of-purchase tenure. They are held by 144 settlers in areas ranging from 70 acres to 1,200 acres, the average size of holding being about 500 acres. Generally speaking, these settlers are in a prosperous condition, so far as I know.

4. *Mr. Evans.*] Have you got any quantity of Maori lands?—I have not got the areas.

5. *Mr. Ronayne.*] It appears there are only some 7,000 acres of Crown lands available for settlement on the western side?—Yes.

6. With regard to the eastern side, is there any Crown land available for settlement on the eastern side of the western route?—I only took out the particulars on the one side. These settlers will be served as well by the railway by either route. It does not make very much difference.

7. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] You have not been through the western country?—I was through forty years ago; I do not know much about it now.

AUCKLAND, MONDAY, 8TH MAY, 1911.

JOHN ALEXANDER WILSON, examination continued. (No. 63.)

5. *Mr. Coom.*] I would like to ask you a few questions, Mr. Wilson, regarding the two routes. Taking the western route first, I understand that the ruling grade is 1 in 50 rising to the north, and the same going south?—Yes.

6. And that the highest summit level reached is 285 ft.?—Yes.

7. The lowest is 37 ft.?—Yes.

8. The minimum curve is $7\frac{1}{2}$ chains?—Yes.

9. And altogether there are fourteen such curves?—I have not counted them, but the total comes to 1 mile 65 chains.

10. Of curves of 9 chains there are twenty?—That would probably be correct.

11. There are a succession of $7\frac{1}{2}$ -chain curves along the route: could these be improved?—They could be improved by a further expenditure, as the country is capable of standing it. Those curves could be increased in radius.

12. Do you think they could be eliminated?—Yes.

13. At 134 miles there is a long $7\frac{1}{2}$ -chain curve, and the work is fairly heavy: it has occurred to me that perhaps it would be feasible at a small increased cost to shorten the line by a tunnel. Am I correct?—You could shorten the line there by increasing the tunnelling.

14. Can you tell the Commission the total number of degrees of curvature on this route?—184 degrees on the average per mile on the western route, and 154 degrees on the eastern route. There is a mile and a half more of straight on the western route than on the eastern, but as some of the curves are sharper, the total curvature is greater.

15. As regards the western route, in your evidence you say that there is 16 ft. of headway at the high-water-level crossing at the Wairoa River?—I said the water was 16 ft. deep there, and I said that depth was sufficient for navigation purposes for vessels up to a certain tonnage.

16. I notice that the plan allows for from 30 ft. to 35 ft. from high-water level to the grade line: is it necessary to have it as high as that?—I do not think so as far as floods are concerned, but it is a suitable height.

16A. There was a suggestion that the eastern route should be shortened at the north end by a tunnel somewhere near Houto: would not such a proposal, if carried out, result in shortening the western route also?—No; it would have no effect on the western route.

17. Does not the line come in at the same point?—It runs into the western route.

18. And the matter does not affect the comparison between the two?—It shortens the eastern route.

19. Would it not shorten the western as well as the eastern between the points of junction?—No, it does not affect the western route.

20. I think it shows so on the plan [plans referred to]?—Perhaps the western route would be shortened from the point of junction; but even if this is done the eastern route is still the shortest.

21. I will put it another way: what is the distance between McCarroll's Gap and the present point of junction near Parakao by the eastern and the western routes?—I had better read the figures.

22. You can see the distances on the plan?—The distance is not correctly stated on that plan, because the figures have had to be varied. In connection with one route the traverses have been straightened, 11 chains have been taken off on the western route, and 14 chains have been taken off on the eastern route on account of straightening the line.

23. Can you give me approximately the distance?—Yes, very closely. The total length of the eastern route is 136 miles 56 chains 32 links; of the western route, 136 miles 16 chains 38 links.

24. What will be the approximate length of the two routes from McCarroll's Gap to the point of junction, supposing the eastern route is diverted near Houto at the north end?—At the eastern route it would be 132 miles; on the western route I think about 132½ or 132¾ miles (Auckland mileage).

25. So that the eastern route would then be shortened by 4 miles 52 chains, and the western route by a little under four miles?—That is about right.

26. It works out that the western route will be shortened almost as much by the tunnel near Houto as the eastern route?—Yes.

27. As to the eastern route, the ruling grade is 1 in 50?—Yes.

28. And there are 60 chains of it going south?—Yes.

29. Going north the ruling grade is 1 in 51?—Yes.

30. And there is a grade of 78 chains in length?—Yes.

31. I note that there are nearly 4½ miles of grade 1 in 60 and steeper going north, and of 4 miles 26 chains of 1 in 60 and steeper going south: is that correct?—I will put in a paper showing a list of the steeper grades. [List put in: Exhibit No. 2.]

32. The highest level reached on the eastern route is 380 ft., as against 285 ft. on the western?—Yes.

33. As to the curvature on the eastern route, I see there are no 7½-chain curves on that route?—No.

34. The minimum curve is 9 chains?—Yes.

35. I make out that there are eleven of those, totalling a length of two miles?—Probably that is correct.

36. On the eastern route you say that at 114 and 115 miles the ground would be liable to slips: are there any means of avoiding that mile and a half of slippery country?—Only by increasing the length of line considerably. A deviation has been surveyed which I would not be prepared to recommend, because it would increase the length of line at this point.

37. Have you any idea of what the additional length would be?—Something over a mile.

38. Is it fair to argue that both routes are of practically the same length?—I think that is a fair assumption.

39. And that it might be possible to shorten either of them? That is correct.

40. At present the estimated cost is slightly in favour of the western route?—Slightly. The tunnelling and bridging is heavier on the eastern route, but the formation and culverts are heaviest on the western. The sum total is slightly in favour of the latter.

41. Can you say which route lies through the best country, having regard generally to aspect and the subsequent maintenance of the line?—I think the reduction of the bridging is a factor in favour of taking the western route, as there would be less bridging to maintain.

42. I am speaking now partly as to the climatic conditions of the different routes. Has one route preference over the other having regard to climatic conditions and aspect to the sun?—The sun aspect is slightly in favour of the eastern route, and that route would also have the best of it as regards the climatic conditions.

43. Can you tell the Commission why you have provided for one station more on the western side than on the eastern?—Stations were fixed at suitable points on the grading, and wherever

it seemed that trade would concentrate. Long spaces between the stations were also avoided. We put a station every four miles if possible, and in that way one station more got in on the western route than on the eastern.

44. In view of the fact that the ruling grade on the western route is 1 in 50 in both directions, and that there is a greater length of 1 in 50 on the western route than on the eastern, and that there are 7½-chain curves on the western and only 9-chain curves on the eastern, how do you estimate that the total resistances are 14 per cent. in favour of the west?—It must be due to the increased height to which the eastern route rises.

45. You have taken the total length of grade and the resistance on that grade?—Yes, resistance multiplied by the distance over which it occurred.

46. If the two steepest grades are compared, is there not a difference of 20 per cent. in favour of the western?—There are two steep grades which you know of probably—one of 1 in 52 with 7½-chain curves going up the Kirikopuni, and the other one running the other way, from the Wairoa to Maungakaramea. These two grades will be found, I think, to be the two heaviest on the routes, and they give a result of 20 per cent. in favour of the western route.

47. From an engineering point of view, which do you consider the better route, if there is any difference between the two?—There is not very much to choose between them.

48. Have you any knowledge of land-values?—I have not much knowledge of land-values, but I think I know good land from bad.

49. On which route do you consider the most suitable land for settlement lies?—I consider the advantage is with the western route, as far as I have seen, and judging by the evidence I have heard.

50. You refer in your evidence to a probable diversion of the western route at Waikiekie, in order to shorten the branch to Whangarei: do you think it is feasible to make a diversion from McCarroll's Gap, midway between the east and west routes, through Waikiekie to Waiotiri Valley, then joining the present western route in the Tauraroa Valley, with a branch to Whangarei through Maungakaramea? I should say that it is quite feasible. It will shorten the Whangarei branch by two miles, possibly more. I am not sure whether it would lessen the western route.

51. Can you give the Commission any information as to the ruling grade and the minimum curvature up to McCarroll's Gap?—1 in 50, with a minimum curvature of 7½ chains radius.

52. What is the ruling grade and minimum curvature north of Parakao?—There is nothing worse than 1 in 50 there, or 7½ chains.

53. Are there any 7½-chain curves?—I am not sure. The country is rather better for constructing a railway north of Parakao.

54. As the Commission has to consider the question of railway communication from McCarroll's Gap through to Kaikohe, can you give the Commission the estimated cost from the Gap to Kaikohe of the line?—I am not able to furnish such an estimate at present. I will do so within the next few days.

55. What is the estimated cost of a branch line to Dargaville and of a branch line to Whangarei?—I am unable to say, because the cost would depend so much on the location of the branches.

56. Taking it at per mile?—I do not think I know sufficient of the country between the two points to say anything regarding the matter, especially as regards the branch to Dargaville, which I think would be the more expensive of the two.

57. Would it be fair to take the average of the main line as the average cost of the two branches?—I think you would be safe in doing so.

58. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] In reference to the diversion of the eastern route on the north, what was the object in diverting the eastern route to the west further south?—The idea was to shorten the eastern route.

59. Or to shorten the whole length from Kaikohe to the Gap?—It would not shorten the whole length, if you were following the western route: but it would do so if you were following the eastern route.

60. Would the diversion of the eastern route at a point farther south improve the whole length between Kaikohe and the Gap?—I do not think it would. It puts the eastern route right on to a bad place, and gives the eastern route the disadvantages of both lines.

61. That answer puts me in a fog as to why this divergence is suggested?—It was a trial line, and it was run with a view to seeing whether the eastern route could not be shortened advantageously.

62. As compared with the west?—Yes.

63. And as compared with the whole line from Kaikohe to the Gap?—It would hardly affect the whole line from Kaikohe to the Gap if the western route were adopted: and I do not think it is an improvement in any way.

64. *Mr. Steadman.*] You have stated that some of the curves on the western route could be improved by tunnelling: would that increase the cost materially?—Yes, of course it would.

65. Can you give us any idea as to the distance?—I have not looked into the matter sufficiently to say.

66. Can you do so approximately?—I am afraid I cannot, because we have not cross-sections on that line at anything like close distances.

67. It might materially increase the cost?—Possibly.

68. Is there any slippery country on the western route?—Yes, and it has been allowed for. On the west there is about half a mile altogether shown on the plans, as against a mile and a half on the eastern route. It is not pretended that that is all the slip country that would be met with, but that is all we were able to locate on the survey.

69. Can the eastern line be straightened in order to reduce the curves?—I think the eastern line is fairly well located in that respect. I do not think the curves would be much reduced on the permanent survey.

70. *Mr. Evans.*] Then the climatic conditions on the east are more favourable than those on the west?—Yes.

71. *The Chairman.*] Might the branch line that you say can be put into the ballast-pit on the Waipu Range eventually be used as a branch line to Waipu, which is situated about eight miles from the Main Trunk line at McCarroll's Gap.—I believe it could be so used, but I have not been through there.

72. Taking into consideration all matters—railway-construction, subsequent maintenance of the line, the class of country to be opened up, and the trade to be obtained—which route are you in favour of?—I think the advantage is with the western route.

73. *Mr. Evans.*] You have taken the question of the population also into consideration?—Yes.

ROBERT WEST HOLMES examined. (No. 65.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are Engineer-in-Chief of the Public Works Department, and reside in Wellington?—Yes.

2. Do you desire to make any statement to the Commission in reference to this matter?—I have no statement to make.

3. *Mr. Coom.*] You know the country on the east and west of the Tangihuas?—I know it as far as Tangiteroria. I have not been across the Wairoa River north of that.

4. Do you know the route east of the Tangihuas?—Yes, I have been over the country, but I have not been actually over the surveyed line.

5. Did you form any impression as to which route, from an engineering point of view, would be better?—I do not think there is very much to pick and choose between them.

6. Did you see the slippery ground Mr. Wilson referred to in his evidence?—No.

7. Have you inspected the plans and sections of the trial lines?—Yes, I saw them in Wellington some time ago. I have not seen them lately.

8. Did you make any detailed comparison between the eastern and the western route?—I did at that time as near as I possibly could from the plans.

9. Do you recollect how the results you arrived at compared with the results Mr. Wilson has given the Commission?—I cannot tell you from memory, but I know there was very little difference between the two routes.

10. That is both as regards costs and engineering aspects?—That is so.

WILLIAM FREDERICK THOMPSON examined. (No. 66.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are District Valuer, residing at Whangarei?—Yes. My district covers the seven northern counties.

2. What we want to know is how can the land be divided up into agricultural, pastoral, and land of poor quality on these two routes from McCarroll's Gap to about Parakau, where the two routes junction?—I may say, I have been over every section more than once. There is very little Native land at all at the start. I do not think there is any from McCarroll's Gap, except a small piece, until you get to the Wairoa River. There is no agricultural land between McCarroll's Gap and the Wairoa River following the route of the railway. It is all very good pastoral land. There are a few bits when you get to the river that are fit for agriculture, but you would not call it an agricultural district. I believe the little Native blocks are now under negotiation for lease. I valued them a little while ago. The pastoral land can be cut up into small sections and dairied upon—say, into 300-acre sections.

3. Have you anything further to say of the country from the Gap to Kirikopuni?—There is no Native land when you get across there—not until you get to Parakau. I feel quite confident there is no Native land on the western side of the western line.

4. Still, from Kirikopuni northwards to the junction—is that agricultural land, pastoral land, or land of poor quality?—It is good pastoral land.

5. Of even quality?—Fairly even. It is not first-class land, but it is what you would call good grazing-land. It would winter one to two sheep to the acre if cleared. That would apply to the country right through from McCarroll's Gap.

6. Is there anything further you want to say about that country?—It is all well watered, which is an important thing in dairying. It could be cut up so as to have plenty of water in every section.

7. *Mr. Becroft.*] Would you say that from Kirikopuni to Parakau 300 acres would be sufficient?—Yes, between 300 and 350 acres.

8. *The Chairman.*] Now I will ask you to take the eastern side?—The land is similar in quality starting from McCarroll's Gap. Following the line along the eastern route northwards for the first five miles you go through fair land, similar to that on the western side. Then from that on for about six miles it passes through poor fern and open country. That is on the route of the line itself. It is not far to the left of it before you get to very fair land at Waikiekie, which is neutral to both routes. From there you go for about three miles through very good volcanic land at Maungakaramea, some of which is first-class agricultural country, but of no very great extent. From there down to Waiotama Valley, about nine miles from Maungakaramea, there is fair pastoral land.

9. To what extent on both sides of the line?—It is a narrow valley. All the land on the eastern side of the Tangihua Ranges is, practically speaking, of no value at all. Of course, on the eastern side of the eastern route there is some very good land—that is, at Whatitiri and Weki Valley.

10. *Mr. Steadman.*] It is agricultural land?—It is first-class dairying land at present. In years to come it may be agricultural land.

11. *The Chairman.*] How many miles?—About nine miles. Round Maungakarama there is only just a mile or a mile and a half. Outside of that is poor barren country. But when you start to go down the Waiotama Valley and Weki Valley right to Whangarei through Maunu, Maungatapere, and Poroti, there is a strip of good first-class country extending about nine miles on the railway and three miles back on the south, five miles north to Poroti, and twenty miles in the centre right through to Whangarei.

12. Going on then?—From Poroti to the Wairua River the land is practically valueless, with the exception of a little on the bank of the river. From Wairua to the Mangakahia River, about three miles, is also poor land, with the exception of about 1,000 acres around the river, which is good land. From the Mangakahia River northwards for about four miles there is some very good land. Part of it is a kahikatea flat and floods pretty badly, and is covered with blackberry, but it is very good soil. It is European land, and is principally owned by the Frasers. Northwards from the four miles there is a strip of very poor country to Parakao, about four or five miles. Of course, near the river the land is better.

13. Do I understand that with the exception of around Maungakarama there is no agricultural land on the eastern route?—There are some flats that could be called agricultural land near the Mangakahia River, but there is no extent of it. There are perhaps 1,000 acres around the river that in time may be used for agricultural purposes.

14. *Mr. Evans.*] How many acres of Crown lands are open for occupation on the western side and on the eastern side?—I do not think there is any on the eastern side. There may be small sections here and there, but the bulk of the land is all taken up. There is none on the western side either until you get past Houto.

15. You say there is very little land at all available for occupation on the eastern side?—Not until you get to Parakao, and then there is a large block of Native land.

16. You say a lot of the land on the eastern side is poor land, but it is held by small settlers: how do they make a living on it?—They make a living off it, but they do not make a living on it.

17. How do they manage that?—They go and get employment away. There are a lot of absentees' sections there. They have never attempted to cultivate them. It is impossible at present under any known methods to profitably utilize that land.

18. It will not even grow grass?—No, it will not even grow ti-tree.

19. What sort of land is it?—Poor pipeclay.

20. What you call gum land?—There is gum on part of it, but some of it is too poor for gum. I dare say it had kauri on it years ago, but successive burnings have burnt the whole of the humus and soil out of it.

21. How many acres of that country are there on the eastern side?—There is a lot of absentee land between Mangapai and Ruarangi and farther on to Waikiekie.

22. You say there are patches of good land and patches of bad land all through it: is there more bad land than good?—Oh, no. From Maungakarama to Waikiekie is all good land. There are about 8,000 acres of poor land from McCarroll's Gap to Parakao, on the eastern side.

23. Is there more land on the eastern side than there is on the western side to be benefited by the railway?—There is no poor land on the western side at all—it is all good land on the western side. I think there is more land to be benefited on the western side.

24. Do you know who owns these large blocks of land on the western side?—Riddell owns 12,000 acres, and I think George Bailey owns between 5,000 and 6,000 acres.

25. Are these people clearing this land and using it?—Yes, half of it is cleared and in grass.

26. What amount per acre would have to be spent to bring the bush land on the western side into grass and fence it?—About £2 10s. to £3 per acre.

27. What would it take to stump the land and make it ready for cropping?—That is not at all practicable. It would take from £10 to £20 per acre. If you waited for fifteen or twenty years for the stumps to rot you could do it much cheaper than that. But it is not agricultural land even then.

28. *Mr. Coom.*] You say that on the west side it is all very good pastoral country: how far from the proposed route do you reckon that extends?—Starting from McCarroll's Gap it extends right to the Wairoa River.

29. Is there not agricultural land at Tokatoka?—Oh, yes.

30. How far from the line, then, does the good pastoral country extend?—Practically the whole way, with the exception of a bit of poor land, which is nothing to speak of, in the centre. The Tokatoka flat is agricultural land.

31. You spoke of some good land on the east before you reach Poroti extending to Whangarei: how far from the line would that be?—Twelve miles right in to Whangarei.

32. Would the bulk of that country be served by the proposed eastern route or by Whangarei?—I should say half would go either way.

33. We have it from the Valuer-General that the capital value of the land for two miles distance on each side of these two routes is practically the same?—Yes.

34. And we find that the population is practically the same?—Yes.

35. Taking that into consideration, and taking a comprehensive view of the two lines, on which side do you consider the land is better?—I consider the western side is better, inasmuch

as it is all even and fair land. The eastern side has got some far better land than on the west, with the exception of Tokatoka, but it has a lot which is bad. There is £15-per-acre land about Whatitiri.

36. Taking a general view, there is not much difference in the land-values?—I have not worked it out, but I should have thought it would have been in favour of the western route, seeing that the land is all of even quality. But it must be right if they have taken it from the books.

37. What is the distance between the eastern route somewhere about Maungakarama and Whatitiri in a direct line to Whangarei, where the good land is?—Twelve miles in a straight line.

38. You have told us that about one-half of that good country will be served by Whangarei and the other half by the eastern route?—Yes.

39. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] How far is Whatitiri from Whangarei?—It is twelve miles by road.

40. What kind of road?—A good metalled road, but not too well graded.

41. Do you know anything at all about the education reserves in the neighbourhood of the Lower Mangonui Bridge towards Tokatoka? I am told by the settlers that the western route is laid out to run practically through the education reserve land: do you know the extent of it?—That is quite correct. I suppose there would be 1,500 acres.

42. You referred to Mr. Bailey: do you refer to Te Kohuroa Block?—Yes.

43. How far is that from the western line?—Three or four miles. Then there is Mangarata, owned by Dreedon and Simpkin, containing about 4,000 acres.

44. And the only other large holding is near Omaunu?—Yes, Riddell's.

45. How is the rest of the land held going through towards the Wairoa River on the west?—Farther down towards the river, below Bailey's, a lot of it is held by the Hardings.

46. To the mouth of the river, keeping to the eastern side of the river, how is the land held there in the Arapohue and Tokatoka Ridings?—They are average holdings. It is all held by private people.

47. Can you give us any idea as to the progress of settlement in that part? Has the country been opening up more rapidly recently?—All through Arapohue and around there it is practically at a standstill. It is nearly all bought up.

48. You mean it is not being further developed and divided?—No, it is being maintained and used for dairying purposes.

49. And is the country generally developing outside that particular district which has been settled for a long time?—Yes.

50. *Mr. Becroft.*] Taking the quality of the land on both sides from McCarroll's Gap to Parakao, in your opinion which would carry the greatest population when opened up by the railway?—I think the west would, decidedly. All that land is suitable for cutting up into 300-acre sections, and of course each one of these sections carries a family.

51. Assuming these large blocks were cut up, what proportion of population would you give to the country on either route?—I feel sure the west will have the biggest, seeing that it is all even country, and that 300 acres will carry a family for dairying purposes. There is better land on the eastern side, but not a very large area of it, and all the poor land there will carry nobody.

52. That is as near as you can state?—Yes.

53. *Mr. Steadman.*] Does not the east carry the greatest population at the present time?—I suppose there will be more people on the east.

54. In small holdings?—Yes.

55. The people are making a living off much less than 300 acres on an average on the east?—I do not think there are many with much less than 300 acres.

56. Is the land not cut up into 40- and 50-acre sections?—There are one or two, but a lot of the people own more than one section. There are no families on individual sections.

57. Do you know in what area the land at Whatitiri has been made available for settlement?—In from 250- to 300-acre sections.

58. Are not a lot of the sections under 100 acres?—There is not one.

59. Do you say that?—I do not think there is a section there under 100 acres.

60. Will you swear there are no holdings under 100 acres?—I am not going to swear anything from memory.

61. Coming to Maungatapere, how many holdings have been cut up there lately that are now far less than 100 acres?—In the Maungatapere Parish there is one section, when you start at the school, of 75 acres, the next is 300 acres, the next is 400 acres, the next is 300 acres, then Hawkin's is 500 acres, and Jack's 175 acres, and the man alongside him has over 100 acres. I do not know of any there under 100 acres.

62. As the east is carrying a large number of people now who are making a living on 100 acres, and you say the west is only suitable for cutting up into 300-acre sections, why do you think that the east is not capable of carrying such a large population as the west?—I think the west will carry more people because of the better quality of the land.

63. Will it not be served by the river?—Of course it will.

64. Do you not think that Tokatoka and Raupo will be served by the river?—They will be served by the river.

65. Is there any more reason to say that the produce from Tokatoka and Ruawai would go to the railway-line than to say that the produce from Whangarei Town would go to the railway-line?—Yes. I dare say Tokatoka is further away from the railway-line.

66. *The Chairman.*] I gather from your evidence that the good land on the eastern route lies between the eastern portion of the Tangihua Range and Whangarei, approximately?—That is so.

67. If the Main Trunk line is brought northwards, and a branch is put in to go through Maungakarema and then into Whangarei, would that not meet the requirements of that good land you have been speaking of on the eastern route?—No.

68. Which part would be left out?—Most of it. I should say if the line came it would go up the Otaika Valley.

69. I mean the line that would go through Maungakarema, and from there to Whangarei?—I do not know how you would put such a line through.

70. A trial is now being made to take the line midway between the present eastern and the present western route down to the Wairoa River, and from there the proposal is that the branch line should go right through Maungakarema into Whangarei: if that were adopted, would such a system not meet the requirements of the good land you have mentioned on the east?—I think not. The good land lies over to Whatitiri.

71. Is Whatitiri on the extreme distance away from it?—Yes, Whatitiri extends to Poroti.

72. How far would Whatitiri be from the railway then?—From six to seven miles.

73. *Mr. Ronayne.*] How far is Whatitiri from Whangarei?—Fourteen miles from Whangarei would get round the whole of it.

74. From Whatitiri in a north-westerly direction towards Parakao, I understand, there is no land to consider—not sufficient to warrant a railway?—I should think not. A great area of it is poor land.

75. So that the only land that should be considered by the railway is that lying between Whatitiri and Mangapai and Maungakarema and Whangarei?—Yes.

76. *Mr. Steadman.*] What about this land that lies at Purua and Aponga: would not that be served by the eastern route?—There is not a great deal of good land until you get a long way down the river.

77. Out towards Hikurangi is the land the same?—Yes; there is good land there, but it is as near to the Whangarei Railway.

78. Is it not twenty miles from Purua to Hikurangi?—No.

79. How far is it?—There is a kind of road there, and it is ten miles.

80. How far from Mangakahia River is this land?—About ten miles; about twenty miles through.

81. How far is it to Ramarama down Lambert's Road?—I should say about ten miles.

FRANCIS CHARLES EWEN examined. (No. 67.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a Crown Lands Ranger, with headquarters at Auckland.

2. Are you prepared with a statement?—No. I have a plan here, with some information from the office.

3. You might please just state the number of Crown tenants on the eastern and western routes?—On the western route at Tangiteroria there are eight Crown settlers, and nearly all the tenures are occupation with right of purchase; at Mangakahia there are thirty-three Crown settlers; at Parakao there are twelve Crown settlers. There are also a number of settlers here who have bought out their freehold. At Tutamoe and Waiatanui there are sixty-nine settlers. On the eastern route there are twenty-two Crown tenants at Whatitiri, under occupation with right of purchase. All the Crown settlers I have referred to are under occupation with right of purchase.

4. *Mr. Evans.*] Do you know the country well?—I was in the country two and a half to three years twelve years ago, and I know from McCarroll's Gap northwards on the eastern route.

5. You know the country between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei, I suppose?—Yes.

6. Do you know the proposed line?—I remember twelve years ago seeing some pegs, and asking what they were, and settlers told me that they were railway, to indicate the direction the line was going.

7. From your knowledge of the land, which is the best land?—I should say there is more good land on the western route than on the eastern route.

8. What sort of land is it between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei?—Poor country, with the exception of a few river-flats here and there. Speaking generally, the country is poor.

9. Would it serve many settlers if the line was made?—Yes, a good many.

10. Do you think it would be a payable line?—I hardly think it would.

11. Do you think the western line would be a payable line?—The one shown on the plan, I think, would be a payable one.

12. *Mr. Steadman.*] You talk about Whatitiri: is that the only land the Government has cut up there that has been taken up under the occupation with right of purchase?—There may be some other Crown lands there. Tangihua is almost on the western route.

13. Is not a good part of the line on the northern side of the Tangihua Range?—There are some Crown sections there, but not many. That is where I mentioned a good many of the tenants had bought the freehold of their holdings.

14. You would have no record of them?—No.

15. How many are there, do you think?—Fifty or sixty, at a rough guess.

16. Then a little farther north there has been a lot of land cut up on the Mangakahia River in times past. That has been bought out, has it not?—No. There are a good many left who have not bought out their holdings.

17. Could you give us an estimate of the number?—No.

18. They have not been taken into your account?—No. Those on the Mangakahia are right between the proposed eastern and western routes, and either the eastern or the western route would benefit them.

19. You could not take them into account as receiving benefit from one particular line?—No.

20. Do you know if there is any accessible road for the Tutamoe settlers?—I believe the roads are very bad.

21. You do not know what ranges lie between Tutamoe and the railway route?—No.

EDWIN MITCHELSON examined. (No. 68.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are a timber-merchant, and reside in Auckland?—Yes.

2. You have been in business in the Wairoa district for how long?—Forty years.

3. And has your business taken you much over the country?—Yes, it necessitated my travelling over every inch of the country through which both the eastern and western routes would pass, and along the tributaries of the various streams flowing into the Mangakahia on both sides; in fact, I think I may say I have a better knowledge of that country than any man whose evidence has yet been taken by the Commission.

4. And that applies to the country from McCarroll's Gap to Kaikohe?—Right through beyond Kaikohe to Mangonui. Before going into the questions before the Commission, I want to remove an impression that was sought to be conveyed to the minds of the Commission by one gentleman—Mr. Long, of Hikurangi—who gave evidence at Kawakawa. He made a statement to the Commission, and also quoted from the report of Mr. Binnie, Inspector of Mines, to the effect that the Hikurangi Coal Company had put down a considerable number of bores in a certain locality and had obtained a good seam of coal, and he could not understand why the company should have abandoned the field after finding good coal. I would just like to say, as chairman of the company, that we did put down thirteen bores in this particular locality at a cost of £2,000. We obtained coal in three only of the bores, the seam being from 9 ft. to 11 ft. in thickness. But the other surrounding bores proved that no extent of coal existed, and the reason of the abandonment was in consequence of the large amount of money necessary to put down a shaft and erect a pumping-plant in order to take out the very small area of coal. Another statement he made was to the effect that the Northern Coal Company put down bores practically alongside our bores and obtained good coal. I want to tell the Commission that the distance from where we put down our bores to the bores recently put down by the Northern Coal Company was a mile and a half to two miles. It is not likely that the Hikurangi Coal Company, after spending £2,000, would abandon a good coalfield.

5. You know the object of the Commission?—Yes.

6. You know we are considering the question of pushing on the Main Trunk line, and if we recommend that it should be done we have to recommend whether it should go to the east or to the west of the Tangihuas, and also we have to report on the advisability of connecting-links between Whangarei on the east coast and Dargaville on the west?—First of all, allow me to preface my remarks by saying this: Possibly I am taking a different view from many people regarding what I consider to be the policy of constructing a trunk railway. I maintain that to construct a trunk line to open up a country such as we have in the north of Auckland the question of cost per mile or shortness of route should not be taken into consideration. I hold that opinion very strongly. To my mind, the question of the construction of a railway should be taken upon the fact of the benefit that is to be derived to the Dominion from the largest amount of land to be opened up by such railway; in other words, that it should be on the principle of the greatest good to the greatest number. Another thing is that the existing population, to my mind, should not be taken into consideration in any shape or form, because it is patent on the face of it that the population, where it exists at the present time, has been forced to take up these places in consequence of the facilities afforded to them. Of course, I know thoroughly both routes, and my strong objection to the western route is that it is crossing two tidal rivers, and that it is not opening up the extent of country which I consider ought to be opened up. Now, you all know that it is impossible for a railway to compete against water. At the present time the railway charge for goods from Auckland to Helensville is, I think, about 15s. per ton. The cost of conveyance of goods from Auckland by way of the North Cape to all ports in the Kaipara, with the exception of Otamatea, is 12s. per ton. The vessels conveying goods do not go there, in consequence of there being no timber to carry away. The cost of the carriage of goods from Dunedin, Wellington, or Lyttelton runs from 10s. to 12s. 6d. per ton. Taking it that you construct the railway by the western route it cannot be expected that the railway will carry goods that are to be consumed in the districts surrounding the Northern Wairoa. So practically as far as the Northern Wairoa is concerned it would be a passenger-line. I admit that there is a considerable strip of good country on the western route, and I maintain there is an equally large area of equally good land on the eastern route. By the adoption of the western route you prevent the people who will eventually become settlers in the Moengawahine, Hikurangi, and Pīpīwai Valleys from deriving any benefit by the construction of the railway by the western route. Moengawahine is pretty well all settled now, but the other districts are pretty well all Native land. Of course, the upper end of the Hikurangi Valley from Kaikou will tap the railway between Kaikohe and Mangakahia: but it is the lower end I am speaking of. There is land in both of these valleys that is equal to anything on the route passing through Tauraroa and Tauroa. If you take the eastern line up the Mangakahia Valley and from a point where it would junction with the western line supposing the western line were constructed, the distance from that point to the Wairoa River, say, to Kirikopuni, about where the line will cross the Wairoa River, is

only about twelve to fourteen miles. If you divide that at the centre you are about six miles from the river and six miles from the railway, so that the distance from the Northern Wairoa to the line is not excessive. The settlers at these two points could either take the railway on the eastern route or the Northern Wairoa River. Unfortunately, you have two mountains in the road—Tangihua on the east side and Mangaru on the west. Taking the western route you would shut out from any benefit to be derived from the railway all the settlers on the north-eastern side of the Tangihua Mountain. I think it is admitted by all who have seen the Northern Wairoa waterway that it is the finest in the Dominion, and that it would be hard to beat it anywhere in the world. From my long experience, both in public and local life, I am satisfied that the land in the Northern Wairoa district is of such a quality that the day is not far distant when practically the whole of the produce obtained from that district will be sea-borne out of the Dominion through the Kaipara waters. It is one of the finest harbours in the world.

7. *Mr. Evans.*] It is a bar harbour?—Yes, but very deep and very wide. The narrow part does not come into question until you are well up the river. Ships of war have frequently been in there. It is going to be a great wool-producing, sheep-producing, and butter-producing district. Practically the whole of it on both sides is accessible to the river itself. But seeing the way population is going, ultimately it will be necessary, in my opinion, to make a branch line which would either connect with Dargaville at a point near Mount Wesley or at Mititai, near Dargaville. The former would be preferable, as at Mount Wesley you have the narrowest part of the river and the deepest water. I have heard a good deal about the gum land. There is a false impression existing in the minds of a number of people regarding the quality of the gum land. It is only three or four years ago when we were told that the pumice land was of no use. Now, I think the articles which have been appearing in the *Herald* in the last week or two will show that the pumice land is going to be of enormous benefit to the Auckland Provincial District. If any of you had been present at the last winter show held here you would have seen roots grown on the pumice land in the vicinity of Waiotapu unequalled by any grown on the richest land in the Auckland district. I have had during the last seven years some considerable experience myself in bringing what is called gum land into profitable cultivation. I think the result of my experience would prove to any person who takes the opportunity of inspecting it that with proper tilling and proper cultivation the gum lands can be made highly profitable. I may say I am strongly averse to any attempt to construct a branch line either to Dargaville or to Whangarei until the Main Trunk line is completed to Hokianga, and I do not think that the present attempt to take the line from Kawakawa to Hokianga should be proceeded with until the route of the Main Trunk Railway has been determined, otherwise you may have the two lines running parallel to each other beyond Ohaeawai. To construct the line from Kawakawa to Hokianga on a route that may not be chosen for the Main Trunk line is suicidal, and a waste of money.

8. *The Chairman.*] I may say that the Trunk line going on from Kaikohe to Hokianga is being made with a view to connecting with the Main Trunk line coming in from McCarroll's Gap. The Main Trunk line must go through the Mangakahia Valley and on to Kaikohe, and now the line that is being made from Kaikohe to touch deep water at Hokianga is being made with a view to joining up with the Main Trunk when it reaches Kaikohe?—That is all right, then. My experience as a Minister of Public Works has taught me that when once you start making branch lines it is at the expense and delay of the Main Trunk. I do not know whether you saw the land in the Opouteke Valley. On the upper end of the Mangakahia the Government, I believe, own some land—right up on the watershed of the Mangakahia. There is simply a dividing range between the Mangakahia and Hokianga Rivers just to the left of the line, and the country will be all opened up by either line, because the Mangakahia Valley is neutral. The railway can be taken up either side of the Mangakahia without crossing the river until you get to the upper end. It can be taken up the western side and cross it at the upper end. On the eastern side it will have to cross the river at three or four places above the junction of the Opouteke. Then there is the question of a swing-bridge, supposing the western route is adopted. I notice you have taken evidence from the Harbourmaster at the Kaipara to show that a swing-bridge would not be necessary. That depends entirely on where the line crosses. I think it is possible that a sawmill will be erected up there at a very early date, in which case vessels of from 300 to 400 tons will go up to load.

9. *Where?*—At Kiriponui. We have had the river measured, and have come to the conclusion that we can take up vessels of from 300 to 400 tons to load. In such event a swing-bridge across a strong tidal river will be detrimental to the traffic. One great advantage of the railway will be that it will make available the enormous shingle-beds in the Mangakahia Valley. There is enough shingle at Mangakahia and Opouteke to metal the whole of New Zealand; and in addition the railway will pass through several volcanic scoria cones in the district between Kaikohe and the Mangakahia River. The country between Hokianga and Mangonui is exceedingly good, as you would see in your travels.

10. *Mr. Evans.*] You say there is quite as good land, and as much of it, on the eastern as on the western side, and you know both sides?—I suppose I have spent more time in the bush and country there than any other man in New Zealand.

11. Have you any idea of the value of land in the western district, taking it altogether, and also in the eastern district?—That is a question I could not answer. I do not know anything about the value of the land per acre in either district. Of course, the bulk of the land is held by Natives in the upper end, and in the Hikurangi.

12. Have you any idea of the quantity of land held by Natives in both districts?—No. It is an enormous area—200,000 or 300,000 acres. The Government department can give you the area of every inch owned by Natives. The worst feature of it is that enormous areas of the land have never been surveyed or put through the Court.

13. Is there much timber left on the eastern line?—Very little, or on the western line either—that is, what would be considered to be marketable timber. There is a good deal of kahikatea timber on both routes, but that is only used for boxmaking.

14. You have not any idea of the value of the land?—Land has been sold on the Wairoa, I have heard, at £20 per acre. I sold land there at £5 an acre, and they are now asking £15 for it.

15. You have also sold land at 5s. 6d. per acre?—Yes.

16. What is it worth now?—That I could not say. One block of land was bought by H. G. Smith from the Kauri Timber Company for 7s. 6d., and he sold it for £20. Then, again, Omanu, Tauroa, and Tauraroa were sold by the company for a very small sum, and the land was sold again at as high as £15 and £16 an acre.

17. Is there much land fit for settlement?—There would be if the Government took the land from the Natives as they do from the Europeans.

18. Do you recommend that?—Certainly. If they take the European land they should take the Native land.

19. *Mr. Ronayne.*] With reference to the pipeclay gum lands, a previous witness stated that it was utterly hopeless to try and do anything with them: what is your opinion regarding the pipeclay country?—The actual pipeclay lands are not very extensive, and there are gum lands and gum lands. The white pipeclay gum land is not worth much, but the ordinary gum land, with proper tilling and draining, is very good.

20. The pipeclay land is comparatively worthless?—Yes, but the extent is not very great. If the Commission would care about going and seeing the experiments I have made on 1,000 acres they would see magnificent pastoral land on one side of the road and on the other side of the road the land is quite barren. An easy journey from Auckland would be to the ranges between Henderson and Kumeo. This is considered to be the poorest gum country, and one settler broke some of it up and has secured a magnificent farm.

21. You stated that if the line was constructed down the western route it would simply be a passenger-line north of the Wairoa. Would not there be a large quantity of stock to be carried?—Yes, fat stock; but the butter, wool, and frozen meat would all go by sea.

22. That is, in the event of frozen-meat works being established in the future?—Yes, and not in the very far future either. It is contemplated now, but the promoters are uncertain whether to go to Whangarei or to Wairoa.

23. You are aware that works have been built at Whangarei?—Yes, but there is a large company formed here, and they are uncertain where they will establish their works.

24. A previous witness stated that there were 600,000,000 ft. of timber on the western line as far north as Hokianga which would all have to go over the railway: "Could not a large proportion of that timber be floated down the river," he was asked, and he replied "No." Is that correct?—It is absolutely incorrect. I did not want to say anything about that. To my mind, it is very indifferent timber. Teraire is not a very good timber. There is a far better timber throughout the route than that. That is the manawa, or the silver-pine, which is a superior timber to that obtained in the South Island. Instead of it being white, almost like kahikatea, it has more the colour of matai. It is timber that cannot possibly be floated. There is not sufficient of it to warrant an industry being established. Teraire is on an equal footing with tawa, which has been used in Wellington for making furniture in imitation of American oak.

25. Is teraire a useful timber for weatherboarding?—No. I have known kahikatea to be used for weatherboarding. Sometimes it stands, and sometimes it does not. Even when painted it gets the worm into it.

26. How about the boats that go from Auckland round the North Cape to the Wairoa ports: are there many boats in the trade?—One steamer goes every month. The vessels come from Newcastle with coal and take freights round to the timber ports, where they load an outward cargo of timber.

27. The steamer only carries cargo to Dargaville, and the goods will have to be transhipped to the various ports on the Wairoa?—Yes. Nearly every vessel that trades to Wairoa takes goods.

28. These goods are carried at practically ballast rates?—Yes; and I may say that the rate of 15s. on the Helensville line was reduced when I was Minister of Railways to counteract the sea-carrying rates. It is not a payable carrying-rate.

29. *Mr. Coom.*] You object to the western route because it crosses strong tidal rivers?—That is one objection.

30. In what way is that an objection?—That is only my own opinion, and my opinion is that if you are establishing a trunk railway it should in every way possible refrain from entering into competition with water.

31. You speak of it as inducing competition with water?—That is so.

32. You do not see any engineering difficulty in crossing a tidal river?—None whatever.

33. You do not think the western route opens up the extent of country the eastern route does?—That is so. It shuts out too much country. Take Kirikopuni to the point where the eastern and the western routes junction; it is not more than fourteen miles away, which is not very great.

34. Do not your arguments apply equally to the eastern route?—No, because it is only fourteen miles from Kirikopuni to where the lines junction in Mangakahia.

35. Take the country south of the Wairoa?—On the Wairoa itself?

36. To Mangakahia, on the western side of the Tangihuas?—The distance is not very great to the western Wairoa, and could at a future time be brought in by a branch railway.

37. Can you tell why the country is so backward when they have this fine waterway?—As a matter of fact, that land was purchased or given by the Natives to Messrs. Walton Bros. fifty or sixty years ago. It was held by them till within the last twelve years, when the Kauri Timber

Company came along and took over all these properties. That land was held by the Kauri Timber Company until three or four years ago, when it was sold to Mr. Niccol, who has recently sold it at a large profit to other people.

38. That is only one block?—It is the principal block in the lot. It comprises 12,000 acres, and contains the best land in the Wairoa.

39. That is the Omano?—Omano, Tauroa, and Tauraroa.

40. That does not apply to the land on the eastern route?—No; most of the land on the eastern side is in the hands of small people.

41. You do not think there is any more land there to be taken up?—There is land that would be taken up if it was roaded. None of the gum land is occupied at present.

42. You think it will be taken up?—Every bit of it.

43. All the gum land near Auckland is not taken up yet?—It is being taken up.

44. But it has had a railway for thirty years?—Yes; but the people had the idea that gum land was absolutely useless.

45. Could a man take it up without capital?—No.

46. It would require a capitalist?—A man would require to have some money. When the Government drained the raupo land at enormous cost, and cut it up at £1 10s. an acre, it was taken up by men without means, and a considerable area of it has gone into the hands of capitalists.

47. Would it not require more money than to take up bush lands?—Yes, because once you fell the bush you can have it in grass in a few months. The other would be more costly.

48. You have an objection to the western route because it would require a swing-bridge across the Wairoa River?—I say that a swing-bridge would impede the traffic.

49. You have no objection to a swing-bridge as a bridge?—No.

50. It is used every day in engineering?—Yes.

51. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Is there not a very large stretch of land between Walton's and Tokatoka and between the Wairoa River and Waikiekie?—There was a large area of land there cut into 40-acre blocks in the Provincial Council days and given to soldiers and settlers, and it is only recently that that land has become available, because it was held largely by the Kauri Timber Company and others for timber purposes. But there have been settlers there who took up the 40-acre grants.

52. You agree that the distance from Mititai to the Upper Mangonui Bridge is about twenty-one miles?—That is so.

53. Would that twenty-one miles of country be served by the Wairoa River?—Not quite to the back.

54. How far would it?—I say you cannot take a railway to serve any particular point. Take the eastern route from McCarroll's Gap, where I believe it is to go through, and divide the space of twenty-one miles, that would give ten miles and a half to the sea. Surely that distance cannot be considered excessive.

55. You agree that provided the western route is adopted there will still be ten or eleven miles of country to be served by that railway which would not be served by the river?—Yes.

56. That applies until you get up close to the Tangihua Mountains?—Yes. On the other hand, you have to take into consideration the enormous area that lies to the northwards of the Tangihua Mountains.

57. Do you think that the settlers living, say, ten miles off from Mititai or Tokatoka would take their goods to the river and on to Helensville and there tranship to the train rather than take their goods fifteen miles to the railway?—Yes: if the cost by river was less than by railway they would take their goods to the water.

58. You know something about the roads?—They are vile.

59. Do you know anything about the roads between McCarroll's Gap and the Tangihuas?—There are none. One of my great arguments all along has been the great benefit the settlers would derive from the railway as a means of bringing them in metal.

60. At the present time that extent of country, which is twenty miles wide, for a good deal of the distance is practically unroaded?—Yes, and will remain unroaded until the railway brings metal.

61. So that in order to develop that country it is absolutely necessary to have a railway?—Yes. The bringing-in of bone-dust and manures would also develop the country.

62. Do you agree or do you not with the statement made by Mr. E. Harding and the valuer for the northern district that from Otamatea County to Hokianga is a stretch twenty-five miles wide of uniformly good country?—I should say there is very little bad land there.

63. You would also agree that such country would pay to put a railway through?—No, I would not say that. I say you should put a railway through the country that is going to be the most useful to the Dominion as a whole, and by putting it through the western route you will limit the area to be developed by the railway. I have a knowledge of the district that Mr. Harding does not possess. I question very much if he has been to the valleys to the north and north-east of Mangakahia River.

64. How far from the Whangarei-Kawakawa line are the districts to the north-east of the Mangakahia River?—In a straight line, they are not very far, but there are valleys to be opened up, and there is a fairly big range between. It would be easier to go to the line in the Mangakahia than to go to the other.

65. Where would you get the best connection through the Mangakahia?—At the bottom of the Nukutawhiti Range.

66. Is that not practically where the eastern and the western routes junction?—I think they would junction somewhere about Parakao. All the land, with the exception of the Nukutawhiti Block, from the Hikurangi River extending right through to Kaikohe, is owned by Natives, with two or three exceptions.

67. You say that the blocks you refer to could be brought in naturally to have an opening to the railway at Nukutawhiti?—Only one section of it.

68. Where would the other section be?—About the mouth of the Hikurangi. One section would want a connection about midway between the Wairoa River and Hikurangi.

69. Do you know the distance between the east and the west routes at that part?—About seven or eight miles. You go by the western side of Houto Mountain. If the route went by the eastern side of the Houto Mountain the distance would not be so great. I have recently learned from Mr. Mander that the eastern route as I knew it and the eastern route as laid down now is quite different. There is a difference of between two and three miles in the routes.

70. In your opinion, you think the time will come, whichever way the line of the Main Trunk goes, that Whangarei will be connected by branch?—Yes.

71. From where do you think it will be connected?—I should think through Maungakarama; but that should not be done until the Main Trunk line is completed.

72. But you think it will in time?—Yes; but neither that connection nor the connection to Dargaville should be attempted until the Main Trunk line is through. The benefits of the line will not be felt until you get away from the Kaipara waters. That has been the stumbling-block all along.

73. You do not agree that the railway should be allowed to come into competition with water traffic?—No.

74. Do you not think it would be bad policy to bring the railway within a few miles of deep water, and to avoid it?—Not purposely to avoid it. I certainly think the line should go to deep water at Hokianga.

75. If the railway touches deep water some classes of merchandise and passengers would take the railway in preference to the water?—Passengers, certainly, who have to go over the bar. Taking the Northern Wairoa district, I question very much if the railway will ever carry a bale of wool from the Northern Wairoa as against the water cost. Stock, of course, is perishable, and must be carried by the railway; but it is carried at a very low rate.

76. The railway has to come within, we may say, easy distance of the river: do you not think it would be better for the railway to touch the river, so that it can compete with the water too?—If it is to go through the centre of the country it should go as near the centre as possible.

77. But independent of that fact, if in putting it through the centre of the country the railway can be made to touch deep water, is it not better to let it do so rather than it should not?—It would be a very good thing for the people residing in the upper district, but a bad thing for the country.

78. You do not agree with Mr. Lamb that it would be ruinous to the steamers to compete with the railway?—The steamer is of very little value. I have been connected with the steamer service for forty-odd years, and during the whole of that time we have only had four dividends. The last dividend was at the rate of 5 per cent., but the previous one, three years ago, was 2½ per cent. for the year.

79. The last was got at a sacrifice of half the capital?—Yes, so there is not much in that.

80. *Mr. Coom.*] It does not say much for the waterway?—It says a good deal. It is the high rate of wages.

81. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] In reference to the large area of Maori-owned land you have spoken of, that all lies to the north of the junction of the western route?—Yes, with the exception of a little strip between that point and Hikurangi. The bulk of it is northward and westward of either route.

82. Taking from Parakao above the junction to the west of the Tangihuas right down to McCarroll's Gap, what Native land is there?—Very little, if any.

83. So that along the western route there is no Native land?—No.

84. It is only when you get beyond the western junction that the Native land occurs?—Have you seen the land about Kaikohe and Ohaeawai?

85. That is farther north?—I think all who have any knowledge of land at all will admit that the land there is very good. That is applicable to either line. I think it is a crying shame that that land should be allowed to remain idle so long.

86. You know something about the timber near Kirikopuni: is there any Crown block there?—Yes; it is about to be advertised for sale.

87. Do you know the extent of that?—Between 30,000,000 ft. and 40,000,000 ft. That includes kauri, totara, matai, kahikatea, and rimu. If you ask me what quantity of marketable timber is contained in the bush between Kirikopuni and the Government bush I could give you a very good idea.

88. There was a witness named Baldwin who told us that he has in his hands for sale 14,000,000 ft.: that would be exclusive of the timber you have already mentioned?—Certainly. I may say we have 15,000,000 ft. exclusive of that.

89. Providing the railway went up the Kirikopuni Valley, would it not tap that timber?—That timber will be all out years and years before the line gets there: it will be out in the next five years.

90. But if they make a start with the railway at Kirikopuni, and go on that way?—I hope they will do so. There would be 40,000,000 ft. or 50,000,000 ft. to come down if that were done.

91. That would go a long way towards making the railway busy?—It would not pay to build a railway for that. Three years would see that out.

92. *Mr. Beerft.*] Looking at the map from a business point of view, would you advocate the construction of a line through poorer land rather than through better-class land?—If the same line would open up a large area I should say yes.

93. Of poor land?—Certainly. It is not all poor land; it is going through good land too.

94. Which line would you advocate from a business point of view—a line which traverses medium to first-class land or a line that traverses poor gum land, medium and good?—If the area was greater on the one last mentioned I would take it there, certainly. I maintain that the eastern route will open up all this land you speak of, because the distance between the junction and the river is so small, excepting that the railway would not go there and would not benefit the owners of the land. Along the western route the railway benefits the owners of the land; but taking it every way, the advantage is so small that the eastern route, to my mind, is essentially the best.

95. In speaking of the western route you say there would be so many districts on the eastern side of the Tangihuas shut off?—You would absolutely cut off everything on the eastern side of the Tangihua Mountains.

96. You have not taken into consideration the water communication on the Whangarei side?—That is down at Whangarei, and that is a good way from the Tangihuas.

97. You would not include the whole country?—Certainly not right down to Whangarei. But the eastern side of the Tangihuas is a long way from Whangarei even in a straight line—it is fourteen or fifteen miles as the crow flies.

98. In reference to the bush north of Kirikopuni, it has been stated that if the line was commenced from Kirikopuni northwards the royalty on the timber on the Crown lands would build ten miles of the railway?—I absolutely do not agree with that. It is a wild statement, and the way to refute it would be to get the information from the Crown Lands Office.

99. You made a statement that all the timber was likely to go by water: is it not a fact that much of the softer timber is lost through putting it in the creeks?—White-pine certainly. It is a timber used largely for boxmaking in Australia more than in New Zealand. If you do not get it away from the stump in three or four months it starts perishing from the end and rots inwards. Millions and millions of feet have been lost through putting it in the creeks and waiting for a flood.

100. Putting in the railway would save all that loss?—It is a question whether they can afford to pay the freight. It is a low-priced timber.

101. *Mr. Steadman.*] When speaking of the Hikurangi district being served by the railway you did not refer to the Hikurangi Settlement?—No, I was speaking of the valley of the Hikurangi River. There is no settlement there at all except of Natives. It is another area of land held by Natives that has never been surveyed or put through the Native Land Court.

102. What would you call the centre line of the country? Would you call it a line midway between Wairoa River and Mangapai?—I would take it as near the centre as possible. I would not go near either waterway. I think the line originally laid down by myself and Mr. Knorpp in 1885 is the best for the Dominion.

103. *Mr. Coom.*] That line is still further east than the line we are considering to-day?—Yes, that was news to me the other day. As I understand it now, the line that is called the eastern route is not so far away from the proposed western route as I thought it was.

104. *Mr. Steadman.*] Do you not think that the country lying to the north and east should be considered in getting railway communication with Auckland just as much as the land that lies to the south and west?—Certainly. I have maintained that all through.

105. I suppose that stock shipped from Mangapai that have to go out through the open sea run more risk than stock shipped in the Kaipara Harbour?—Yes.

106. So the people living on this north-eastern line would be just as interested in getting the Main Trunk connection with Auckland as the people in the south-west, and should be considered?—Certainly they ought to be considered, but I say the existing population is not a factor. The factor, to my mind, is what is going to be of the greatest benefit to the Dominion in the future. Everybody knows that the people at Whangarei and Dargaville and all these places have gone there because of the easy facilities.

107. *Mr. Evans.*] With your experience, what does it take per acre to lay bush country down in grass?—I should think, £3 per acre.

108. How many sheep to the acre will the northern bush country carry when laid down in grass?—From two to two and a half; in some places three. Some of the rich flats will carry four.

109. You say if the line of railway either east or west were constructed metal would be obtainable for road-making?—Yes, sufficient to road New Zealand.

110. Have you any idea what amount of stock and goods are exported from the Wairoa River district: you say the river would compete with the railway?—I say the sea competes now; and it will not be so very long before the river and the coast compete with the railway by carrying away the produce produced in the Northern Wairoa district over the sea to England. It will not travel by rail at all. The Hobson County is a rich county. It has a patch of poor land. It has also a patch of medium land extending from opposite Tokatoka down to the Heads, but every inch of it is better than the land I have magnificent pasture on now.

111. Is the land at Nukutawhiti all Maori land?—No, the bulk of that land is owned by the Finlayson brothers.

112. How do you account for so little land being cleared and so few settlers on the land?—Want of facilities for getting to and from their sections. It is a marvel to me that so many people have gone up the Mangakahia district, considering the bad roads they have to travel in winter-time to get to Whangarei. The same thing applies to Dargaville.

113. I understand you are not in favour of continuing the Whangarei line to junction with McCarroll's Gap?—Certainly not, until the Main Trunk is through.

114. You would be in favour of it then?—Yes.

115. *The Chairman.*] You are quite satisfied in your own mind that the Main Trunk line, if taken by the east route to Mangakahia and from there on, would be a paying proposition to the Dominion?—I am certain it would.

116. And you base that opinion upon the land that would be opened up by the railway?—Yes. I would like to say this: that if the land is going to be kept unoccupied as it is at the present time the railway could not possibly pay. The first step should be to acquire the Native land by hook or by crook.

117. Are you familiar with the provisions of last year's Native-land legislation?—I have not seen it. I say emphatically that the first thing to be done is to acquire that Native land prior to the railway going through the country at all. The railway should not go beyond Mangakahia until that land is acquired.

118. *Mr. Becroft.*] And would you say these large private holdings, too?—Certainly. I think the land should be divided up amongst the people. I do not believe in any person holding too much land.

119. *The Chairman.*] Do you know that the bulk of the Native land affected by this line is included in Moutatau Block, and do you know that 40,000 acres of that block is being administered by the Native Land Board?—I had not heard that, but I am very pleased if it is so.

120. Do you not know that the Karae Block, in the Hokianga district, is being administered by the Native Land Board?—I am very pleased to hear it is so.

121. You say the Native area is about half a million acres: do you know what Maori population is carried upon that half-million acres?—I have not the slightest idea.

122. Do you know the Maoris in that area number between eight and ten thousand?—I suppose if you take the area from the Mangakahia River to the North Cape there would be more than eight thousand Natives. There is a lot of land in the Whangape and Herekino districts held by Natives still.

123. Do you know that the lands about Kaikohe are at present being acquired by Europeans under the provisions of the recent Native-land legislation?—I have not heard that.

124. Seeing there is a population of Maoris there at the present time, and seeing the facilities that are given for opening up Native lands, and also seeing that the Government can acquire Native lands, would you still say there should be no construction of the Main Trunk line until these lands in the far north are acquired?—No. I was not aware of the fact that power had been given. But though legislation may give power to effect certain things they may not be carried out. That has happened over and over again.

125. You say that the Main Trunk line *via* the eastern route would be a payable proposition to the Dominion: would you say or would you deny that the Main Trunk line *via* the western route would be a payable proposition to the Dominion?—They both would pay when settled, but not now. The settlement must follow the line. But I say the line to be adopted should be the line giving the best benefit to the country as a whole. I say either would be a payable proposition to the country.

126. How much timber is there left in the Wairoa—ten or twenty or thirty years' supplies?—What class of timber are you speaking of?

127. Marketable timber?—Ten years' supply at the outside. I should say that for kauri there is not more than three or four years' life.

128. What other timbers will then be payable as from the Wairoa?—Rimu, totara, matai, and white-pine.

129. And ten to twelve years' time will finish up the timber on the Wairoa River?—Pretty well.

130. Where will the rimu go?—To the south principally. Sydney and Melbourne are both becoming good markets for rimu timber.

131. Where will the totara go?—South. The Auckland market is supplied with totara from Taupo.

132. The matai?—That is a timber that is coming into general use. It is a first-class timber for flooring purposes.

133. What is the freight on these river steamers per ton between Dargaville and Helensville?—I think, about 10s., on an average.

134. Do you know what freight they are paying to-day at Kirikopuni?—I cannot tell you.

135. Do you know that Baldwin swore he was paying £1 10s. to £2 a ton at Kirikopuni for general freight?—I should say that was a very great exaggeration. I can get you the exact price. It all depends on the class of goods. That might be the freight on case goods, but not on ordinary goods.

135A. You admit there is no chance of any reduction being made by the river steamers?—Certainly not, unless they want to lose money. The rates are as low as they can be.

136. Your impression is that the freight will be about 10s. per ton on an average, to Dargaville: would it not be more to other places?—Yes, higher up from Dargaville I think it is 3s. or 4s. a ton more.

137. In ten years' time, supposing this railway does not go to the west, then the people on the river will be dependent upon freight *via* Helensville and the steamer?—And the coast outside.

138. What will keep the boats going outside after the timber is done?—There will be nothing.

139. So after the timber is done the people in the Wairoa will be dependent on the steamer to and rail from Helensville?—Certainly. The reason of the low freights now from the south and Australia is because they have timber back.

140. The freight, you say, by rail is 15s. to Helensville and 10s. by steamer?—I think so. I am not speaking by the book.

141. So you estimate that in ten years' time the freight will be £1 5s. a ton to Dargaville?—Yes.

142. Do you know Mangapai, on the east coast?—Yes.

143. Do you know what the freight is there?—I have no idea.

144. The Mangapai freight is 5s. a ton by scow and 12s. 6d. a ton by steamer; that is one-half of the freight to Dargaville?—Yes; the railway gets 15s. of the Dargaville rate.

145. Take to Kirikopuni; that is roughly about 122 miles by the line?—I do not know whether you are aware that though the rate from Auckland to Helensville for goods is 12s. 6d., for persons residing at Helensville it is about £1. It does not really matter what the rates are they will be by scale, on the Main Trunk line by mileage.

146. From the landing at Mangapai, what freight would go from the railway to Mangapai?—None at all.

147. Is it not a fact that this eastern route would be barren as far as freights are concerned from approximately McCarroll's Gap to Maungakaramea?—Yes.

148. Now, on the western side, the Omano people border on the Wairoa River, do they not?—Yes.

149. And they have to go right across the peninsula to Mangapai with their products if they send them there for shipment?—If they thought of doing so, of course; but they are served by the Wairoa.

150. Do you know that fat stock and lambs have been driven by cattle-buyers from Omano and shipped at Mangapai?—I have not heard of it. A great many sheep and cattle from this district come down to Northern Wairoa: far more than go the other way. Cattle-buyers start on the Northern Wairoa and pick up cattle from farm to farm as they go along, and will take cattle to the nearest point. Last summer I passed two thousand head coming by way of Henderson to Auckland, many of them from the Northern Wairoa.

151. We have had evidence that fat stock were taken out of the Northern Wairoa and driven to the rail-head. If the railway was up there the fat stock would be taken to the railway at once?—Yes; and store stock driven.

152. All along the Wairoa is dairying-country: would not that railway be a means of carrying butter-fat to the different factories, and thus be the means of closer settling the lands?—Of course the line itself will induce settlement.

153. Would it not make the whole of the western lands dairying-country?—Certainly, if the land was taken out of the hands of the large owners.

154. But the eastern route would not assist that portion of the Wairoa as dairying-country?—That is so; but the same thing would apply to the eastern side.

155. Is there any dairying you know of on the western side to-day?—No.

156. Is there on the east?—Yes, at Maungakaramea, Waikiekie, and Maungatapere.

157. Will the railway going by the east develop the dairying industry any more than it is developed at present by the factories at the places you have mentioned?—I do not think it would for one side or the other.

158. What dairying is done on the western side?—Nothing.

159. If the railway went there would it not be the means of making all the western route available for dairying?—For dairying or sheep, whichever paid best.

160. And the eastern route would not open up any new country for dairying?—It would open up all the eastern side of the Tangihua Mountains—between them and Maungatapere and right on to Poroti, Purua, and Moengawahine.

161. How far is that area from Maungakaramea?—Seven or eight miles.

162. Where is the land that would be benefited?—The eastern route would open the Whatitiri land for dairying.

163. Do you know the Whatitiri Valley?—I have been over it scores of times.

164. Is not that valley nearer to Maungatapere than to the railway-line?—Not the whole of it. One-half would be nearer.

165. One-half would go to Maungatapere?—Yes; and the other half would go the other way.

166. Is not the other half nearer to Maungakaramea?—No.

167. After you get away from that good land, there is the poorer class of land on the east coast?—Yes.

168. That, you think, would be brought into cultivation by the railway?—Yes.

169. What would it produce?—Grass, and that produces butter.

170. What would be the procedure of putting it into grass?—Plough it.

171. What would it cost to cut the ti-tree?—It would cost £5 or £6 an acre, including fencing, to bring it in to be of any good. That, of course, is exclusive of the cost of the land.

172. How long would the grass remain on it?—Absolutely for ever, if top-dressed and treated properly.

173. Without any further expenditure?—No; you would have to top-dress with basic slag and potash.

174. How often?—Every seven years.

175. What would that cost?—£2 an acre.

176. Would the western lands be brought into grass for £3 an acre?—For £3 or £4 an acre.

177. How do you make it £4?—If you include fencing it would be so; but fencing perhaps should not be included in the cost, for so much depends on the nature of the fence and the size of the paddocks. The way I treat the gum land is to plough it once in the autumn, and disc it several times, and let it lie fallow, sowing the seed the following March, and the following autumn I top-dress. I treated one piece of land that way eight years ago, and it is as good as anything about Mangere.

178. How much does it cost to clear the ti-tree?—£1 5s. an acre.

179. How much per acre to plough it?—14s.

180. How much to disc it?—Say, 12s. an acre.

181. What would be the cost of manuring?—4 cwt. to the acre—£1 15s.

182. Grass-seed?—£1 10s. per acre for the best mixture. Of course, it could be done for less with cheaper and poorer grasses.

183. What would it cost for basic slag?—£1 an acre.

184. Now, on the bush land, what would it cost per acre to fell the bush?—£1 10s. per acre.

185. And to grass the land?—£1 10s. per acre.

186. You make the cost of breaking in the gum lands £6 16s. per acre?—That is, to get it to perfection.

187. And bush land £3 per acre?—Yes.

188. You were speaking about several localities that would be served by the eastern railway and not by the west, and among them was the Purua Valley. Now, the Pipiwai and the Moengawahine empty into the Hikurangi, and that meets the Mangakahia somewhere about the bridge?—Yes, above it, I think.

189. Do you know how far the western route is away from the Mangakahia Bridge?—I could not give the exact distance.

190. The river is navigable to the Mangakahia Bridge, is it not?—For very small boats it is.

191. There is a road running from Kirikopuni to the Mangakahia Bridge, is there not?—I believe there is now.

192. Is that road more than four miles?—It is nearer twelve.

193. At that point, as the crow flies, there is a difference of about three miles and a half?—Yes, but you could not make a road in that distance.

194. Is the establishment of freezing-works dependent on the railway, or are they going to depend on the river entirely?—On the river entirely. If the company can get the ocean steamers to go to the Wairoa the matter will be settled.

195. Supposing the line were sent by the western route, do you think it would be a good business proposition to start from Kirikopuni and let the line go northwards as soon as possible?—If the western line is decided on, certainly; and from Hokianga as well.

196. What is the upset price of the Government kauri?—It ranges according to the distance and facilities for getting it out—from 2s. 6d. to 3s. 6d. per 100 ft.

197. What would be the increased value of the kauri if the railway went into the bush from Kirikopuni?—I do not think the Government would gain anything, because a horse-tram would bring the timber out cheaper than the railway.

198. You do not think that the pushing-on of the railway beyond Kirikopuni would bring out any timber?—If done at once it would.

199. If it was done in two years, and the kauri was put up for sale, what would be the increased value of the kauri?—Not much, if any. Kirikopuni Creek is a competitor. It runs right up to the timber.

200. You think the railway would be of no use so far as the timber is concerned?—No. I think the railway would be useful for opening up the country for settlement; but the quantity of timber that is there is so small that it is not worth considering so far as the railway is concerned.

201. You mention a branch railway from the Gap to Whangarei, and also a branch railway from the Gap to the Wairoa: what freight would be carried from the Gap to Whangarei and *vice versa*?—To Whangarei only, I should say very little.

202. What freight would be carried from McCarroll's Gap to Wairoa?—The same thing would apply—nothing to the Wairoa. It would not pay. The railway could not possibly compete against water, unless they made a breaking rate.

203. Was it your idea to throw a bridge across the Wairoa?—No; it would impede traffic.

204. What do you think of a branch line from Kirikopuni to Dargaville, and so link up the Dargaville-Kaihu system?—I do not think it would pay.

205. Would it not carry the Dargaville passengers round by Kirikopuni to Auckland?—I do not think so.

206. Which way would they go?—I think it would be cheaper to go by the river. It costs 17s. 6d. return—that is, 8s. 9d. each way—between Dargaville and Auckland by the existing route.

207. *Mr. Steadman.*] With regard to the good Native lands around Kaikohe, do you not think, in view of the approach of this railway, the Government ought to stop the acquisition of these blocks in large areas by private individuals?—Most certainly.

208. And that the Crown should pre-empt the whole of that land at once?—If possible, I think they should.

ARTHUR HERBERT O'LOUGHLIN examined. (No. 69.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am Railway Goods Agent at Auckland.

2. You have prepared some tables of freights for the information of the Commission?—Yes [tables handed in; see Exhibit No. 4]. The first table is the rates on goods between Auckland and Newmarket and all the ports of the Kaipara Harbour. The next shows the present passenger and parcels rates between Auckland and the ports of the Kaipara. The third shows a few examples of the different classes of goods under the railway tariff. The next one is the through rates by steamer and rail to Auckland from the stations on the Whangarei Section of railway—that is, through booking. The next table shows the local rates on the Whangarei Section. These rates are all dead-weight rates.

EXHIBITS.

EXHIBIT No. 1.

Registrar-General's Office, Wellington, 6th May, 1911.

North of Auckland Railway Commission.

YOUR memorandum of the 1st instant, addressed to the Registrar-General, asking for the population according to the recent census of the country for a distance of seven miles on each side of the proposed eastern and western routes of the North of Auckland Railway, has been referred to me.

In reply I have to inform you that it is practically impossible to get exactly what you require, but the attached schedule gives the populations required approximately, and may probably be sufficient for the purposes of the Commission.

Every sub-enumerator's district is divided into small blocks, shown on our maps by the Survey Office, and the exact population of these blocks are ascertained for the purposes of the Representation Commissioners. These are the blocks mentioned by letters or figures in the schedule. Where the whole of a block has come within the seven-mile line the population is correct, but where the seven-mile line runs through a block the population of the portion included has been estimated proportionately as the division appears on the map. The figures given for parts of blocks are therefore only approximately correct.

The populations for Paparoa Riding and part Wairau Riding of Otamatea County are not yet available, but as these apply exactly to both routes their exclusion will not affect the totals for comparative purposes. The total for each route would merely be increased by the same number.

I return the map forwarded.

M. FRASER, Government Statistician.

The Under-Secretary, Public Works Department, Wellington.

• POPULATION (APPROXIMATE) WITHIN SEVEN-MILE RADIUS OF WESTERN AND EASTERN BRANCHES (PROPOSED) OF THE NORTH AUCKLAND RAILWAY.

<i>West.</i>	<i>East.</i>
Otamatea County—	Otamatea County—
Wairau Riding (part).	Wairau Riding (part).
Paparoa Riding.	Paparoa Riding.
Mareretu Riding (Sub-district IV), Blocks 1, 2, 3, 4	Mareretu Riding (Sub-district IV), Blocks 1, 2, 3, 4
165	165
Matakohe Riding (Sub-district III)—	Matakohe Riding (Sub-district III)—
Matakohe Road District, Block 7 and part Block 5	Matakohe Road District, Block 7 and part Block 5
99	86
Outlying part N.W. Road District, Block 7	
40	Whangarei County—
Tokatoka Riding (Sub-district VI), Block 4	Waipu Riding (Sub-district VI)—
24	Waipu Road District, Blocks G, parts H, I, and E
Whangarei County—	20
Waipu Riding (Sub-district VI)—	Waipu North Road District, Blocks A, D, E, part B
Waipu Road District, Blocks G, parts E, H	155
17	Outlying Riding (Sub-district V), Block D
Waipu North Road District, Blocks A, D, part E	2
71	Mangapai Riding (Sub-district V)—
Mangapai Riding (Sub-district XII)—	Blocks J, K, L, M
Ruarangi Road District, parts Blocks F, G, H, I	115
71	Ruarangi Road District (XII), Blocks F, G, H, I
Waikiekie Road District, Blocks J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R	94
173	Waikiekie Road District, Blocks J, K, L, M, N, O, R, parts Q, P
32	169
Outlying Riding, Blocks S, T	32
Maungakaramea Road District, Blocks part C and A	318
102	Maungakaramea Road District, Blocks A, B, C, D, E
178	Maunu Riding (Sub-districts XI and IX)—
Hobson County—	Blocks E, J, K, L, parts D, F, G, I Block part C
Okahu Riding (Sub-district IX), Blocks D, F, G, H, parts C, I, J	261
50	14
Maunganui Riding (Sub-district X), Blocks E, parts D, F	Wairau Riding (Sub-district VIII), Blocks 10, parts 11 and 9
82	15
Tangiteroria Riding (Sub-district XI), Blocks 1, 2, 3, 4	Hobson County—
192	Tangiteroria Riding (Sub-district XI), Blocks 3, 4, 1, part 2
Maungaru Riding (Sub-district VI), Blocks 1, 2, 3	163
187	Maungaru Riding (Sub-district VI), Blocks 1, 2, part 3
Tangowahine Riding—	152
Sub-district V, Blocks C, D, part B	Tangowahine Riding—
250	Sub-district V, Blocks C, part D
Sub-district VI, Blocks A, E, D, parts B, C	113
65	54
Total	Total
1,798	1,928

6th May, 1911.

M. FRASER, Government Statistician.

PART EXHIBIT No. 2.

NORTH AUCKLAND RAILWAY.

GRADIENTS STEEPER THAN 1 IN 100 ON THE EASTERN AND WESTERN ROUTES RESPECTIVELY.

Mileage.	Grades 1 in 70 and steeper.				Grades between 1 in 70 and 1 in 100.			
	Eastern.		Western.		Eastern.		Western.	
	Grade.	Length in Chains.	Grade.	Length in Chains.	Grade.	Length in Chains.	Grade.	Length in Chains.
From 98 To 99	1 in 54-715	80	..	..	..	..	1 in 77-70	15
99 100	1 in 57-64	40	1 in 66-00	31	1 in 95-65	20	1 in 77-70	5
100 101	..	..	1 in 66-00	14	1 in 73-72	21	..	..
			1 in 66-00	9				
			1 in 66-00	4				
101 102	..	..	1 in 66-00	6	..	..	..	..
			1 in 66-00	22				
			1 in 63-20	23				
102 103	1 in 51-93	48	1 in 50-00	41-40	..	..	..	..
103 104	1 in 53-33	80	1 in 50-00	75	..	..	..	..
104 105	1 in 68-44	56	1 in 50-00	74	1 in 91-03	24	..	..
105 106	..	..	1 in 50-00	34	1 in 82-50	25	..	..
			1 in 67-30	23				
			1 in 50-00	29	1 in 80-20	62	..	..
106 107	..	..	..	..	1 in 98-92	7	..	..
107 108	1 in 66-00	50	1 in 50-00	78	1 in 99-00	23	..	..
108 109	1 in 52-80	2	1 in 50-00	19	..	..	..	..
109 110	1 in 52-80	80	1 in 50-00	40				
110 111	1 in 52-80	2						
	1 in 50-77	30	1 in 50-00	66	..	..	..	..
	1 in 50-77	16			..	..	..	..
111 112	1 in 50-77	20	..	..	..	..	..	..
	1 in 52-80	20						
	1 in 58-20	40						
112 113	1 in 55-00	35	1 in 50-00	16	..	..	1 in 71-07	14
113 114	1 in 55-00	30	1 in 50-00	27	..	..	..	..
			1 in 50-00	47				
114 115	1 in 66-00	40	1 in 50-00	6	..	..	1 in 97-9	27
	1 in 50-77	40						
115 116	1 in 50-77	38	1 in 50-00	34	1 in 74-84	22	1 in 88-00	16
116 117	1 in 66-00	18	1 in 50-00	21	..	..	..	..
117 118	..	..	1 in 50-00	31	..	..	..	..
			1 in 68-90	15				
			1 in 50-00	34				
118 119	..	..	1 in 50-00	60	..	..	..	..
119 120	..	..	1 in 55-00	10	..	..	..	..
			1 in 66-00	9				
120 121	..	..	1 in 66-00	10	1 in 94-28	10	..	..
121 122	1 in 66-00	44	1 in 50-00	24	..	..	1 in 95-80	5
			1 in 50-00	14				
122 123	1 in 60-00	40	1 in 66-00	16	..	..	1 in 95-80	4
			1 in 66-00	3				
123 124	1 in 60-00	35	1 in 66-00	7	1 in 99-00	21	..	..
124 125	..	..	1 in 66-00	7	1 in 80-00	32	..	..
125 126	..	..	..	..	1 in 80-00	30	..	..
126 127	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
127 128	1 in 57-24	40	..	..	..	..	1 in 92-57	27
128 129	1 in 57-24	40	..	..	..	..	1 in 91-03	27
	1 in 66-00	17	..	..	..	..	1 in 88-00	13
129 130	1 in 66-00	60	1 in 60-69	53	..	..	1 in 88-00	27
130 131	1 in 50-00	35	1 in 60-69	27	..	..	..	..
			1 in 58-75	35				
131 132	1 in 50-00	11	1 in 55-00	20	..	..	..	..
	1 in 55-00	32	1 in 66-00	45				
132 133	1 in 55-00	10	1 in 60-00	13	1 in 77-64	46	1 in 82-50	25
133 134	..	..	1 in 60-00	33	..	..	..	..
			1 in 69-14	44				
			1 in 60-00	3				
134 135	..	..	1 in 60-00	27	1 in 94-30	26	..	..
			1 in 55-00	53	1 in 76-30	20	..	..
135 136	..	..	1 in 55-00	27	..	..	..	..
136 137	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Totals ..	..	1,129	..	1,359-4	..	389	..	205

EXHIBIT No. 3.

NORTH AUCKLAND RAILWAY.—SURVEY OF ALTERNATIVE LINE NEAR WAIKIEKIE.

Public Works Office, Whangarei, 9th May, 1911.

Memorandum for Resident Engineer, Public Works, Whangarei.

THE alternative route leaves the western trial survey at 5 miles 4,417.2 (Norris's mileage from McCarroll's) and joins the same survey again at 18 miles 6,805.0. The route is as follows: Otamatea County—Block III, Matakohe, Sections 22, 21, 20, 28, 93; Whangarei County—Block XV, Tangihua, Sections 63, 1, 59, 60, 49, 58, 57, 54, 55, 56, 13, 16, 14; Block XIV, Tangihua, Sections 14, 15, 17, 21, 18, 19, 20, 163, 87, 88; Block X, Tangihua, Sections 88, 96, 94, 93; Block VII, Tangihua, Sections 92, 144 (E.R.), 143 (E.R.), 2A; Hobson County—Block VII, Tangihua, Sections 1A, 3; Block XII, Maungaru, Section 3, joining Norris's survey on eastern side of Tauroa River.

Taking the survey of "alternative" mile by mile as marked on lithograph, the first mile is on a grade of 1 in 60 to saddle at road, with 20-ft. cutting on top, easy sidling, with light formation, and curves of radius 12 chains. The second mile is on grade of 1 in 50 on steeper sidling, and fairly heavy work, with a good limestone quarry having about 150,000 cubic yards of stone in sight at 2 miles. The third mile has also some 1-in-50 grade from creek crossing up to tunnel-site, with fairly heavy sidling-work and 12-chains-radius curves. At about $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles, at road, a tunnel of 12 chains is required through ridge: the country will probably be sandstone in tunnel, and the ridge is wet and may slip. The fourth mile is on a grade of 1 in 50, along easier sidling, with similar curves. The fifth mile is still on 1-in-50 grade on similar ground for half-way, with room for a station-ground near junction of roads at about 5 miles, also allowing a line to run off towards Whangarei as indicated by line running towards the north-east on lithograph. The sixth and seventh miles are heavy, running along steep gullies on 1-in-50 grades with a tunnel of 22 chains through ridge at Tokatoka Road near 6 miles 30 chains. The eighth mile is still on 1-in-50 grade, and will require perhaps 9-chains-radius curves in steep country. The ninth mile is partly on 1-in-50 grade with heavy work and sharp curves, and partly on the easier country with 1-in-70 grade and lighter work. The tenth mile is on easy country, with room for a station-yard on south side of Tauraroa River. A bridge of 120 ft. in length will probably do for river here, with a four-span bridge, 80 ft. long, for the Piki Wahine Stream. The eleventh mile is in heavy work on a 1-in-50 grade. The twelfth mile is particularly heavy, with a short tunnel of 8 chains at $11\frac{1}{4}$ miles. The thirteenth mile is easy work on easy grade. The first $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles are on sandstone country, good grazing; from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 miles the country is limestone and still good grazing; from 3 to 12 miles the line is on sandstone, and very good grazing, especially from 6 to 12 miles; from 12 to 13 miles is first-class grazing-country, with a lot of river-flat good for cultivation.

The length of the line is apparently identical with western line as surveyed by Mr. Norris. The length of 1-in-50 grading is greater than that on western line, the valleys being shorter and apparently steeper. The tunnelling is longer than on Norris's line. The formation will be somewhat similar to Norris's corresponding length, perhaps a little heavier; the bridging should be similar to that on Norris's line, perhaps shorter; the curves will be similar on both lines.

The quarry at 2 miles seems a good one: samples of stone taken from site are sent to you with report.

J. J. WILSON, A.E.

EXHIBIT No. 4.

TABLES OF FREIGHTS AND FARES BETWEEN AUCKLAND AND THE PORT OF KAIPARA, ALSO FROM AUCKLAND TO STATIONS ON THE WHANGAREI SECTION OF NEW ZEALAND RAILWAYS.

PRESENT THROUGH RATES ON GOODS BETWEEN AUCKLAND OR NEWMARKET AND PORTS ON THE KAIPARA HARBOUR.

Between Auckland or Newmarket and—

Class of Goods	Tangowahine and Tangiteroria.				Dargaville (Town Wharf), Mangawhare, Mount Wesley, Arakapu, Mititai, Ruawai, Te Kopuru, Tokatoka, Tikinui, Raupo.				Naumai, Aranga, Tataraniki, Hangatu, Dargaville Railway, Katiri, Dennis's Wharf, Rutu, Maitaki, Tutamoe, Avoca, Anatea, Muku, Umu, Poutu, Ru Point, Tangaihi, Searrot's, Arapohue, Horehore, Bradley's Landing, Tangatiki, Sail Point, Pohutu, Buckland, Aoroa, Bately, Komiti, Whakapirau, Pahi, Ararua, Hukatu, Matakohe, Māreretu, Waihiri, Bickerstaffe.				Maungaturoko and Kaiwaka.				Paparoa.
	Rail.	Steamer.	Total.	Rail.	Steamer.	Total.	Rail.	Steamer.	Total.	Rail.	Steamer.	Total.	Rail.	Steamer.	Total.		
Class "A" Goods	20/-	15/-	35/-	20/-	14/-	34/-	20/-	12/6	32/6	20/-	11/6	31/6	20/-	11/6	31/6		
Class "B, C, D" Goods	15/-	15/-	30/-	15/-	14/-	29/-	15/-	12/6	27/6	15/-	11/6	26/6	15/-	11/6	26/6		
Class "E" Goods	6/3	13/6	19/9	6/3	12/6	18/9	6/3	11/-	17/3	6/3	10/-	16/3	6/3	10/-	16/3		
Class "F" Goods	20/6*	13/6	16/11	20/6*	12/6	15/11	20/6*	11/-	14/5	20/6*	10/-	13/5	20/6*	10/-	13/5		
Class "N" Goods	7/10	13/6	21/4	7/10	12/6	20/4	7/10	11/-	18/10	7/10	10/-	17/10	7/10	10/-	17/10		
Class "P" Goods	6/1	13/6	19/7	6/1	12/6	18/7	6/1	11/-	17/1	6/1	10/-	16/1	6/1	10/-	16/1		
Class "Q" Goods	4/5	13/6	17/11	4/5	12/6	16/11	4/5	11/-	15/5	4/5	10/-	14/5	4/5	10/-	14/5		
Drapery	20/-	17/6	37/6	20/-	16/6	36/6	20/-	15/-	35/-	20/-	14/-	34/-	20/-	14/-	34/-		
Dangerous goods	40/-	26/6	66/6	40/-	25/6	65/6	40/-	24/-	64/-	40/-	23/-	63/-	40/-	23/-	63/-		
Furniture (packed)	20/-	26/6	46/6	20/-	25/6	45/6	20/-	24/-	44/-	20/-	23/-	43/-	20/-	23/-	43/-		
Furniture (unpacked)	25/-	26/6	51/6	25/-	25/6	50/6	25/-	24/-	49/-	25/-	23/-	48/-	25/-	23/-	48/-		
Timber (sawn) from Auckland	1/10†	1/6	3/4	1/10	1/6	3/4	1/10	1/1‡	2/11‡	1/10	1/-	2/10	1/10	1/-	2/10		
Timber (sawn) to Auckland	1/4	1/6	2/10	1/4	1/6	2/10	1/4	1/4‡	2/5‡	1/4	1/-	2/4	1/4	1/-	2/4		

* Six-ton truck. † Per hundred.

Per ton, with a few modifications. S.s. "Tui" general-goods rate, 10/-
 Per ton, with a few modifications. S.s. "Tui" general-goods rate, 11/6

PRESENT PASSENGER AND PARCEL RATES BETWEEN AUCKLAND AND PORTS ON THE KAIPARA HARBOUR.
Passengers.

		Auckland to—																														
		Pohutu.				Tangatiki, Sail Point, Tangaihi.				Raupo, Tikinui.				Komiti, Batley, Whakapirau, Pahi, Matakohe, Ararua, Kukuau, Mareretu, Waihiri, Bickerstaffe.																		
Single.	Return.	Single.		Return.		Single.		Return.		Single.		Return.		Single.		Return.																
		Rail.	Steamer.	Total.	Rail.	Steamer.	Total.	Rail.	Steamer.	Total.	Rail.	Steamer.	Total.	Rail.	Steamer.	Total.																
3/3	5/-	8/3	6/6	7/6	14/-	3/3	7/6	10/9	6/6	10/9	3/3	7/6	10/9	6/6	12/6	19/-	3/3	7/6	10/9	6/6	12/6	19/-	3/3	7/6	10/9	6/6	15/9	12/6	15/9	6/6	17/6	24/-
		Rail.		Steamer.		Total.		Rail.		Steamer.		Total.		Rail.		Steamer.		Total.		Rail.		Steamer.		Total.		Rail.		Steamer.		Total.		

NOTE.—These are second class by rail; all one class by steamer. First class by rail is 1s. 7d. additional, single ticket, and 3s. 2d. return.

Parcels to all Ports per Kaipara Steam Ship Company or Sellars-Allen Company.

		3 lb.		7 lb.		14 lb.		28 lb.		56 lb.		84 lb.		112 lb.		
		Rail.	Steamer.	Rail.	Steamer.	Rail.	Steamer.	Rail.	Steamer.	Rail.	Steamer.	Rail.	Steamer.	Rail.	Steamer.	
		/6	/6	1/-	/6	1/9	1/-	1/3	1/6	2/-	1/6	2/9	1/6	3/3	1/6	4/9
		Total.		Total.		Total.		Total.		Total.		Total.		Total.		

EXHIBIT No. 4—continued.
EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT CLASSES OF GOODS UNDER RAILWAY TARIFF.

Class A.	Class B.	Class C.	Class D.	Class E.	Class F.	Class N.	Class P.	Class Q.
Books Boxes Candles Confectionery Hollow-ware Joinery Kerosene Linoleum Oilcloth Tea Tobacco Tubs Sundries	Beer (bottled) Boots Earthenware (in cases) Engines Hides Implements (agricultural) Leather Luggage Machinery Oil Paints Saddlery Sugar	Ale (in bulk) Bread Castings Earthenware (in crates or casks) Eggs Meat (fish) Nails Rice Tallow Treacle	Bacon (Gravestones Hams (packed) Iron, corrugated (packed) Iron (unmanufac- tured) Oysters Tar	Barley Bonedust Bran Guano Flour Maize Kainit Oats Manure Pollard Potatoes Sharps Wheat	Carrots Chaff Firewood Hay Mangolds Lime Posts and rails Marrows Pumpkins Straw Turnips	Coke Coal (imported)	Coal (native) Anthracite (bi- tuminous)	Bones Coal (native brown) Gravel Metal (road) Sand Scoria Stone (rough)

EXHIBIT No. 4.—*continued.*

THROUGH RATES (STEAMER AND RAIL), AUCKLAND TO AND FROM THE UNDERMENTIONED STATIONS, WHANGAREI SECTION RAILWAY.

Stations.	Class A in Consign- ments under 30 Cwt. Per Ton.	Class E, in Consign- ments over 30 Cwt. Per Ton.	General Merchandise. Per Ton.	Chaff. Per Sack.	Chaff. Per Pressed Bale.	Rams. Each.	Cattle.		Sheep.	Horses.	
							One.	Two or more. Each.		Single.	Two or more. Each.
Whangarei ..	11/-	11/-	11/-	4½d.	5½d.	4/6	20/-	15/-	4/-	20/-	17/6
Mair ..	11/-	11/-	11/-	4½d.	5½d.	4/8	20/-	15/-	4/-	22/-	19/-
Kamo ..	11/-	11/-	11/-	4½d.	5½d.	4/6	20/-	15/-	4/-	..	..
Ruatangata ..	11/9	10/6	14/-	6d.	7d.	4/6	20/-	15/-	..	22/-	19/-
Kauri ..	11/9	10/6	15/6	6d.	7d.	4/6	20/-	15/-	4/-	22/-	19/-
Hikurangi ..	12/3	10/10	17/6	6d.	7d.	5/3	21/-	16/-	4/9	25/-	20/-
Waro ..	12/6	11/-	18/-	6d.	7d.	5/3	21/6	16/-	5/-	25/-	20/-
Otonga ..	12/11	11/3	19/4	7d.	8d.	5/9	22/-	17/6	5/3	24/-	20/6
Whakapara ..	13/2	11/5	20/-	7d.	8d.	5/9	22/-	17/6	5/3	24/-	20/6
Waiotu ..	13/9	11/10	22/-	8d.	9d.	5/9	23/-	18/6	6/-	24/6	21/-
Hukerenui ..	14/3	12/1	23/4	9d.	10½d.	6/9	23/6	19/-	6/6	25/-	23/-

PASSENGERS, AUCKLAND TO WHANGAREI.

	Saloon.	Steerage.
Steamer ..	15/ single, 22/6 return	10/ single, 15/ return.
Rail ..	6d.	4d.

WHANGAREI SECTION.

Goods of Classes A, B, C, D, and H will be charged as Class A, except otherwise specified.

Goods of Classes A, B, C, D, and H conveyed between Opau, Kamo, and intermediate stations will be charged 3s. per ton, weight or measurement, at the option of the Department. Ships to place in and take delivery of goods from trucks at Opau Wharf. Quantities of less than 1 ton will be charged *pro rata* at this rate instead of at the rate specified under Regulation 2 of Part III. Minimum charge, 9d.

Carts, drays, express wagons, and wagons will be charged at the rate of 1s. per mile for the first ten miles, and 3d. per mile for each additional mile. Minimum charge, 5s.

Goods of Classes P and Q consigned from Waro, Hikurangi Coal Company's siding, and Northern Coal Company's sidings, situated between Waro and Otonga, to Opau for shipment will be charged 2s. 6d. per ton, including weighing and delivery to ship by skip.

Goods of Classes P and Q consigned from Ruatangata to Opau for shipment will be charged 2s. per ton, including weighing and delivery to ship by skip.

Class K.—*Timber.*

The Railway Department may require owners to unload timber from the Railway Wharf at Opau. For unloading done by the Railway Department at Opau the following charges will be made, per 100 superficial feet :—

At the skids	s. d.
At the Railway Wharf	0 0½
	0 3

All logs unloaded at the skids shall be taken delivery of by consignees in the harbour within the booms. Delivery will be deemed to be complete when the logs are placed within the booms.

Storage : On all timber not removed from the booms within one week 1d. per day per 100 superficial feet will be charged.

Timber consigned from Hikurangi and Mangahuru to Opau will be charged 9d. per 100 superficial feet.

Sawn timber consigned from Foot's Siding, Mander and Bradley's siding, and Whakapara to Opau will be charged 1s. 1d. per 100 superficial feet.

Timber, Otonga to Opau, will be charged 1s. 1d. per 100 superficial feet.

Timber from Waiotu to Opau will be charged 1s. 3d. per 100 superficial feet.

Log timber, Whakapara to Opau, will be charged 1s. 1d. per 100 superficial feet.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (1,600 copies, including maps), £104.

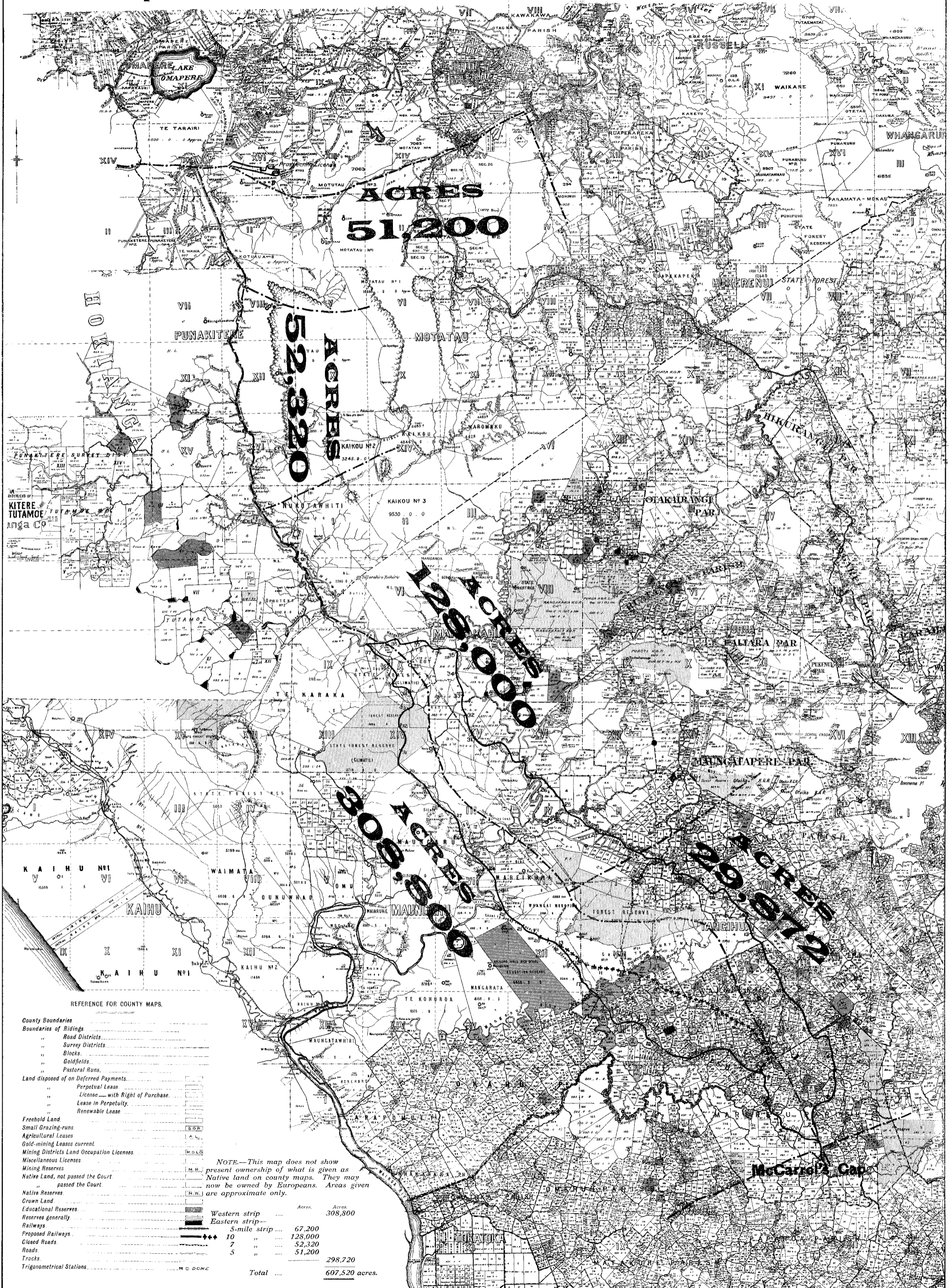
By Authority : JOHN MACKAY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1911.

Price 3s.]

NORTH AUCKLAND RAILWAY.

Map showing, in colours, approximate total areas of western and eastern strips between given lines on each side of centre line of country; also the approximate tenure of the respective holdings.

Scale:



REFERENCE FOR COUNTY MAPS.

- County Boundaries
- Boundaries of Ridings
- " Road Districts
- " Survey Districts
- " Blocks
- " Goldfields
- " Pastoral Runs
- Land disposed of on Deferred Payments.
- " Perpetual Lease
- " License with Right of Purchase
- " Lease in Perpetuity
- " Renewable Lease
- Freehold Land
- Small Grazing-runs
- Agricultural Leases
- Gold-mining Leases current
- Mining Districts Land Occupation Licenses
- Miscellaneous Licenses
- Mining Reserves
- Native Land, not passed the Court
- " passed the Court
- Native Reserves
- Crown Land
- Educational Reserves
- Reserves generally
- Railways
- Proposed Railways
- Closed Roads
- Roads
- Tracks
- Trigonometrical Stations

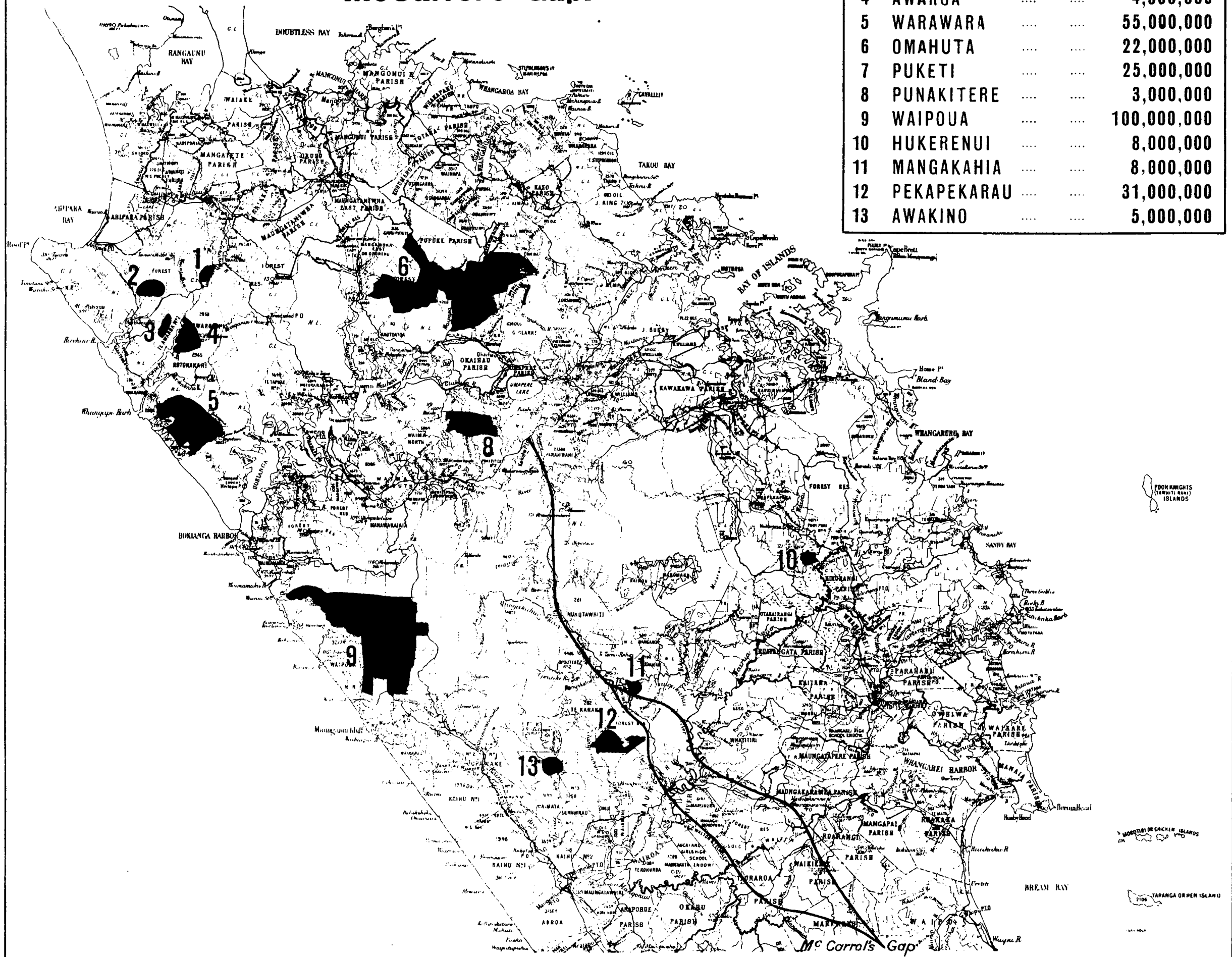
NOTE.—This map does not show present ownership of what is given as Native land on county maps. They may now be owned by Europeans. Areas given are approximate only.

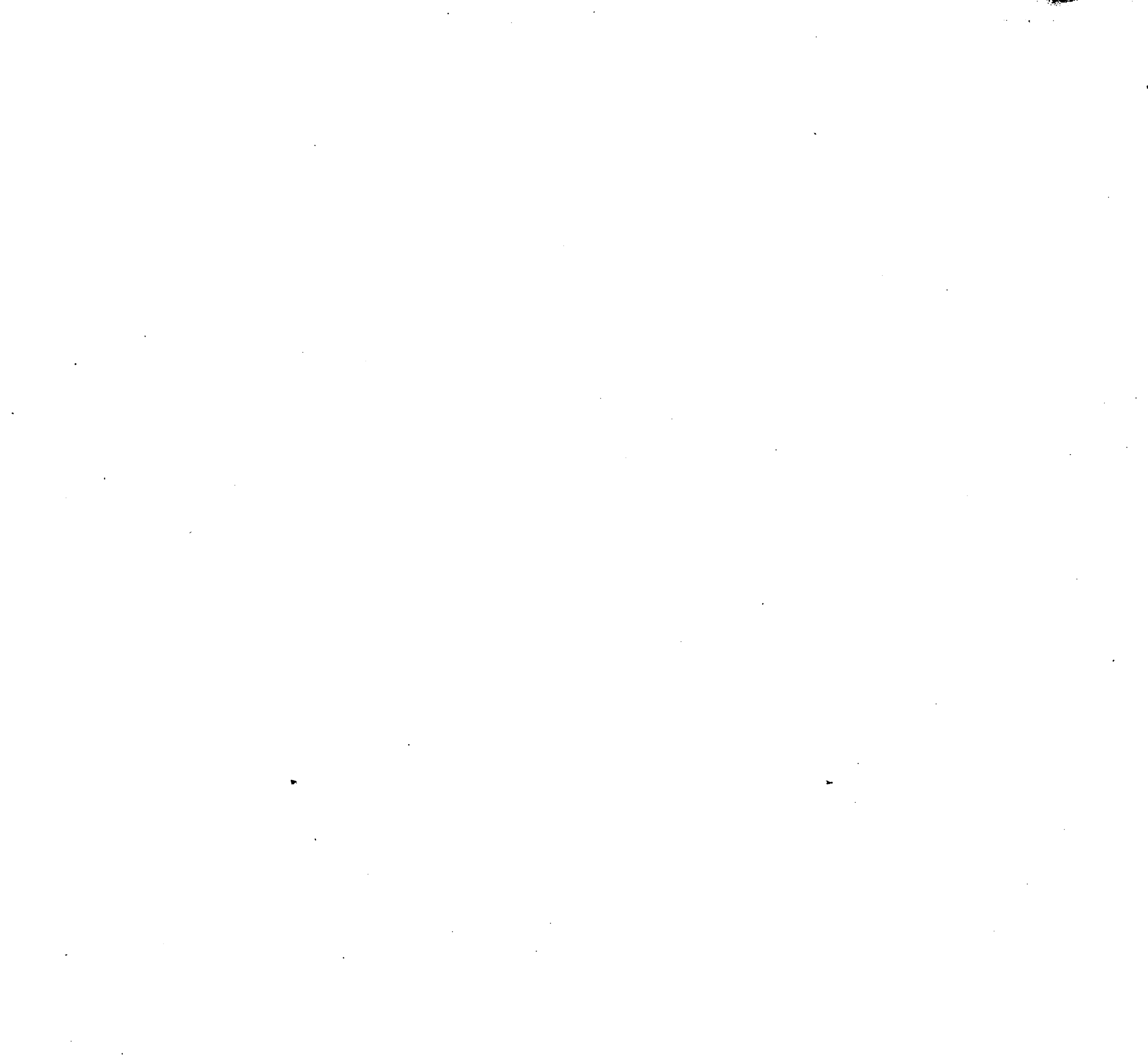
	Arees.	Arees.
Western strip	51,200	308,800
Eastern strip	52,320	
5-mile strip	67,200	
10 " "	128,000	
7 " "	52,320	
5 " "	51,200	
	298,720	
Total	607,520 acres.	

McCart's Cap

Map showing timber on Crown Lands and State Forests, North of McCarrol's Gap.

		Approx. Super. Ft.
1	TAKAHUE	1,000,000
2	HEREKINO	4,000,000
3	AWAROA	2,500,000
4	AWAROA	4,500,000
5	WARAWARA	55,000,000
6	OMAHUTA	22,000,000
7	PUKETI	25,000,000
8	PUNAKITERE	3,000,000
9	WAIPOUA	100,000,000
10	HUKERENUI	8,000,000
11	MANGAKAHIA	8,000,000
12	PEKAPEKARAU	31,000,000
13	AWAKINO	5,000,000

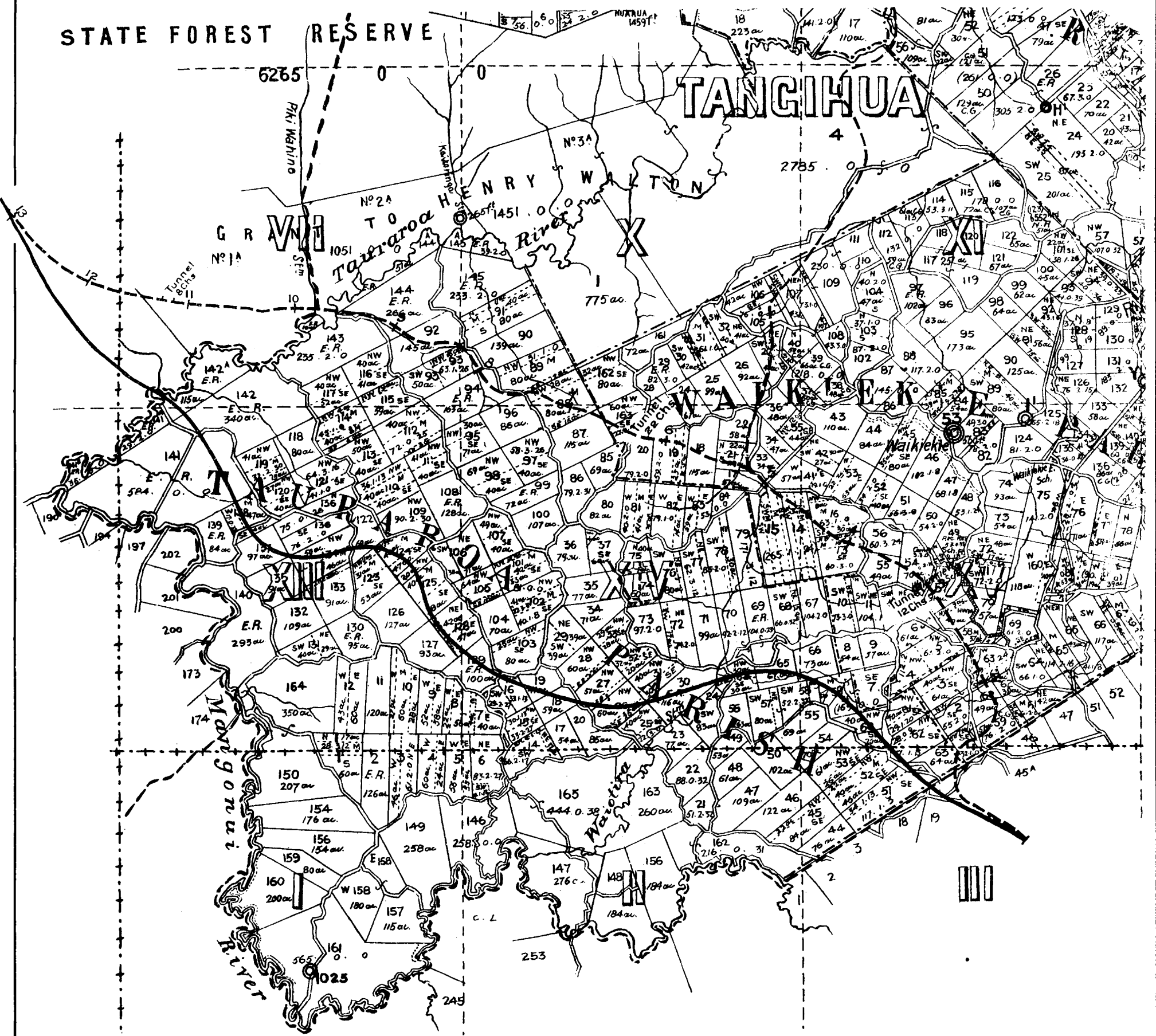




Map showing Alternative Western Route near Waikiekie reported on by J. J. Wilson, A.E.

STATE FOREST RESERVE

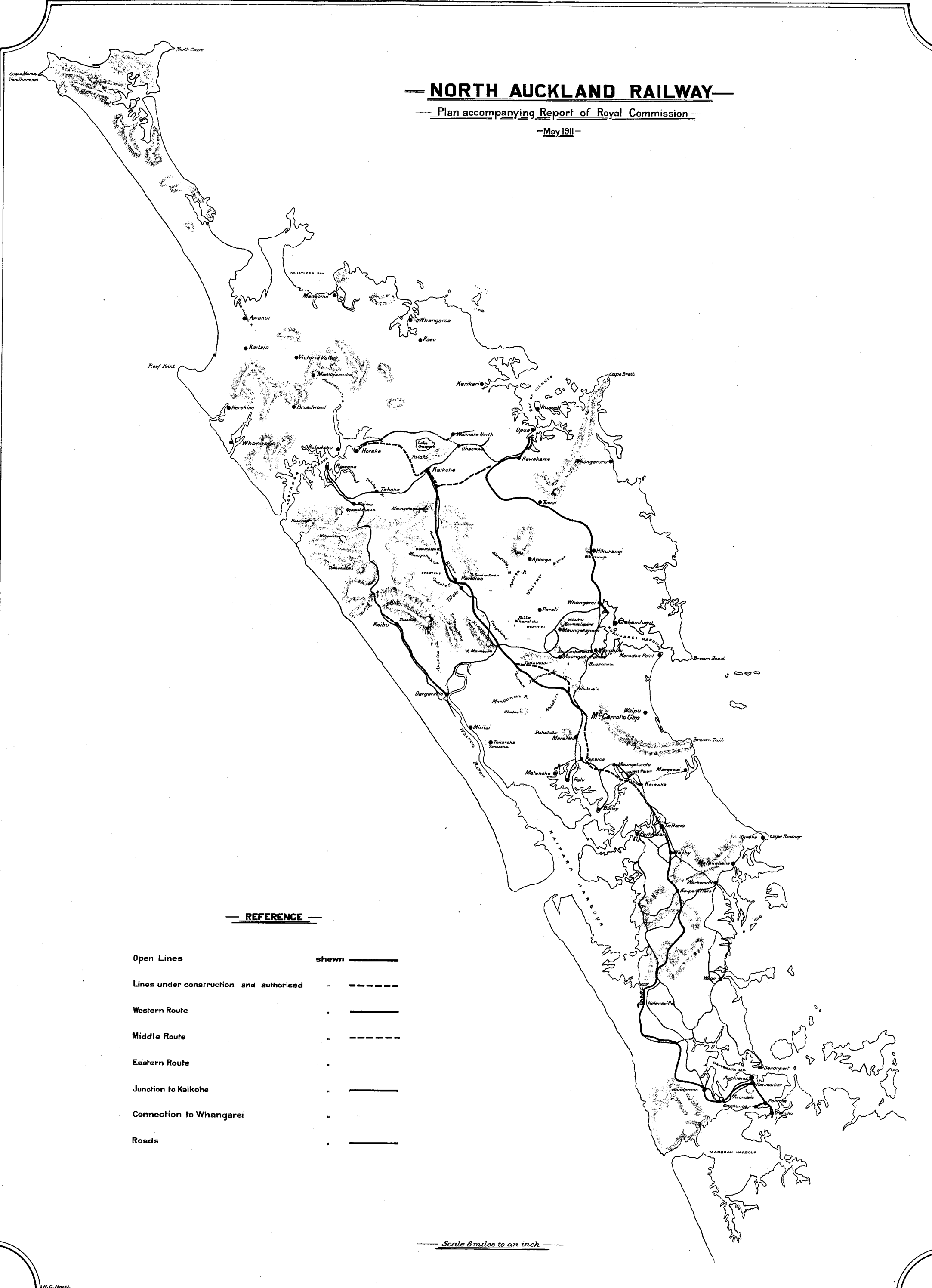
TANGIHUA



NORTH AUCKLAND RAILWAY

Plan accompanying Report of Royal Commission

May 1911



REFERENCE

- Open Lines shewn
- Lines under construction and authorised "
- Western Route "
- Middle Route "
- Eastern Route "
- Junction to Kaitiaki "
- Connection to Whangarei "
- Roads "

Scale 8 miles to an inch

