

19. *Mr. J. Duncan.*] How many miles of line remain to be constructed to the 93-mile peg?—Fifteen.

20. You are equally familiar with both routes?—Yes.

21. And you say that, in your opinion, the difference in the cost of construction as between the eastern and western route is £93,000?—Yes, as the western route is laid out there. That, I am quite sure, is within the mark. And that estimate is not taking into account the line over this slipping ground, which I would not presume to estimate within £20,000.

22. Are the grades on both lines the same, or which is the better of the two?—I should say that the eastern route would be the easier grade, because it does not go down so close to high-water as the western route does. The western route practically goes down to sea-level, and it has to rise a good deal, while the other keeps about a mile or more to the eastward of Maungaturoto, on the higher grade. I consider that the eastern route has been beautifully laid out, and they have made the best of the route on the western side too, I think.

23. You are in favour of abandoning the rest of the eastern route from the 90-mile peg, and joining it to the western one?—Yes.

24. Because there the western route, in your opinion, is the better of the two?—Yes, and from the end of either line the cost further to the northward is very much the same—that is, you can go to the east or west of the Tangihua Ranges, as may be decided on, from either route.

25. Have you any information at all as to whether the country has sufficient population to make the extension of the line a paying concern?—Beyond where?

26. As far as the line is projected?—Oh! most certainly. It is part of the main trunk line. I am certain that the country warrants it now.

27. The population is large?—It is increasing, and the quantity of stock that is being taken down from there by all the available routes is increasing every year.

28. Is it agricultural country the line goes through, or pastoral?—It is all agricultural.

29. It is capable of growing cereals?—Yes, except about a mile up the mountain creek. There is a gorge there, and you can hardly call that agricultural country.

30. Is this country generally capable of high cultivation?—Yes, it is under cultivation now. But this is hardly in my department.

31. *Mr. Buxton.*] Up to the point of deviation on that eastern line, does the line run through good country there?—The country becomes very good at the point of deviation at Ross's Hill. The Kaiwaka country is better than the country behind. If you were there, and saw, as I have seen, the magnificent grasses and crops of turnips that are grown upon what a few years ago was considered irreclaimable gum land, you would be surprised, as I was.

32. It is largely farming land?—It is all ploughable.

33. *Hon. Mr. Buddo.*] In your statement you said that the nineteen miles and a half of line from the deviation was going to cost £93,000 more than a similar distance on the eastern route?—Yes, I said that.

34. How do you allocate that? Is it principally bridge-work?—About £50,000 of that would be bridge-work. Twenty-five thousand pounds of it would be for extra line, including the ballast-line. Then there would be about 700 yards of tunnelling. The tunnelling, of course, as I have not seen the sections, is the point on which I am not so certain as I am on the others. The tunnelling might cost more or it might cost less.

35. Looking at this matter as a business transaction, and with a view to the development of the country which the railway runs through, if you were the engineer for a private company which route would you take?—Most certainly the eastern route. I would have no hesitation whatever. Those bridges and that slipping ground would be a nightmare to me if I were obliged to go through there; in fact, I do not know that I would undertake to run a railway through that slipping ground.

36. Do you think the railway returns on the eastern route would be equal to those on the western?—So far as I can see they would; but, of course, that is not in my department. The east coast settlements just now labour under extraordinary difficulties. The Waipu is an old-settled place, and that is eleven or twelve miles from the Maungaturoto Station. That is a very important country, and it would be splendidly served by the eastern route. I consider that, excepting Whakapirau, this proposed compromise would make a line that would be to all intents and purposes as good as the western route. But that I consider is altogether out of the question—to spend not only £93,000, but a twentieth part of that, to reach a settlement—I mean Whakapirau—of something like five square miles. It is a peninsula, and round five-sixths of its perimeter there is good tidal water and good anchorage and wharfage.

37. What is the nature of the grades on the roads leading from the eastern side? I understand there is a low range of hills there between any of the routes and Waipu, we will say?—There is a gorge from Waipu to Maungaturoto.

38. Is the grade reasonable?—Quite. There is a beautiful road through it there—a traffic road through the gorge.

39. Are there any other roads, as you go further north towards Whangarei, through the same low range?—That I could not say. I have not examined that portion.

40. *Mr. Colvin.*] In what year did you make this survey?—A few months ago: 30th September is the date of the report.

41. For whom did you report?—I reported to the Chairman of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce at the request of several gentlemen interested in the routes.

42. You think the western route is not so favourable for a railway as the eastern route?—It does not amount to any thought about the matter. I am as certain as that I am standing here that the eastern is the most favourable route.