

43. *The Chairman.*] You mean from an engineering point of view?—Yes.

44. *Mr. Colvin.*] The eastern route would pay as well as the western?—Yes; but that is not in my department.

THOMAS COATES, settler, Pukekaroro, made a statement. (No. 4.)

1. *The Chairman.*] We shall be glad to hear what you have to say?—I should like to state that I have been in the North Auckland district for over forty-three years. I have spent twenty years on this peninsula [indicated on the map], and the rest of the time—twenty-three years—at Pukekaroro.

2. Have you got property on the western route?—I have not, but my wife has. I have here a telegram from Mr. Litten, the Councillor representing Kaiwaka, Hakaru, and Mangawai, and in it he requests me to appear here to-day to represent those districts. I have also a telegram from Mr. Bowmar, of the Mangawai Railway League, asking me to attend here on behalf of the League. Here is another telegram from the secretary of the Railway League at Hakaru, asking me to attend. As I said, I have been in the country forty-three years. I am the owner of about 2,000 acres at Pukekaroro. I bought that land in 1885, and paid up to £10 an acre for it. It is kauri land. When the kauri is away from it it is really second- or third-class land. I mention this because Mr. Stallworthy has more than once spoken of me as being a great landowner; but, as I have a wife and eight grown-up children, I do not think that quantity of land is excessive. I have a small area of leasehold land near Auckland, but that 2,000 acres is all that I own. On this property there is a big quantity of stone. That is the natural product of this Kaiwaka district. It is a trachite rock, known as the Bald Rock. I have brought this photograph to give you an idea of the Bald Rock. [Photograph produced.] That rock contains about 50,000,000 yards of stone. A portion of it is in a slaty state, but about half of it is solid and without seam. It is a building-stone of very great value. The trachite in one form is of a slaty nature. It is easily broken, but is very hard.

3. Is it good for road-metal?—It is splendid for road-metal and for railway-ballast, and for pretty well every other purpose. I have sent samples of this building-stone to Mr. Speight, the geologist, of Christchurch, and also to Professor Scott, and I have here their reports upon it. [Documents put in.] Comparing this with granite, granite I believe has a breaking-strain of about 11 tons per square inch, whereas this stone has a breaking-strain of something like 16 tons per square inch. I have also a report by Mr. Fallen on this stone; also Mr. Pond's report and analysis. [Document put in.] I have in addition an analysis of agricultural limestone, and a report by Mr. Wiseman, the architect for the Auckland Harbour Board. [Documents handed in.] What I want to impress upon you is this: The North Auckland district has been known as the roadless North—for this reason: there is no stone obtainable there. After leaving Morningside, right up to Pukekaroro there is absolutely no stone whatever fit for ballast purposes, road-metal, or anything else. The cost at present of getting inferior stone—that is, rotten sandstone or the hydraulic limestone which has been used hitherto—is from 8s. to 12s. 6d. a yard. That is the cost to put it on the roads. The people have all been waiting for the extension; for the railway is the only means of distributing stone either from the Auckland end or the northern end. Then, again, after leaving Pukekaroro there is no other stone till you come to McCarroll's Gap—I suppose twenty miles further. This is the most serious thing for all the local bodies and the individuals living between those two places. [Places indicated on map.] Mr. Seddon, when opening the line to Kaipara Flats, promised the people all along the line that as soon as the railway was extended they should have a supply of cheap stone. I may say that the cost of breaking, quarrying, and putting this stone into trucks would not exceed 3s. a yard. There is also a deposit of agricultural limestone at Pukekaroro within a few chains of the railway, and, as this North Auckland country is clay land, a supply of this would be valuable for liming the soil. Then there is hydraulic limestone in abundance, also lithographic limestone, and we have, too, a mineral spring there. I should like to say that this eastern route was surveyed in the first place by Mr. Knorpp, thirty years ago, and has since been surveyed by Mr. Hanna, Mr. McInnis, and Mr. Holmes, and other engineers, and without exception they have all selected this route. I have here Mr. Holmes's report. Will you have it read?

*The Chairman:* We have it in the Public Works Statement—the essence of it, any way.

*Witness:* There Mr. Holmes speaks very strongly indeed in favour of the eastern route. The line is authorised to Maungaturoto *via* Pukekaroro, and it is fixed to Kaiwaka and beyond. I have here a letter from the Under-Secretary for Public Works to Mr. Litten, and this is the plan referred to.

[Document and plan handed in, and letter—as follows—read by the Clerk: “Public Works Department, Wellington, 5th October, 1908.—SIR,—Referring to your telegram of 28th ultimo, asking that the site of the proposed railway-station should be fixed as early as possible to enable the County Council to proceed with the construction of roads in the vicinity, I am directed by the Minister of Public Works to state that the site has now been fixed, and is shown on the plan forwarded herewith. It is situated a little to the north of the tunnel passing through the ridge on which is a district road, joining the main road near the accommodation-house. The precise route of the approach road to the station has not yet been finally decided upon.”]

*Witness:* As I have to speak here for the people of Hakaru, Kaiwaka, and Mangawai, I should like to point out that their outlet-hitherto has been through Mangawai, and that is a very bad bar harbour. It very often happens that steamers have to wait for even a week before they are able to enter the harbour. If this eastern route were adopted it would be a great gain to these people: they would be able to get away pretty well every day in the week. The population of those three places is 450, exclusive of Maoris and Austrians. A good deal has been said about the freights on