

the western side and the eastern side. The freight to Mangawai is 15s. a ton and to Waipu 16s.; while the carting from Mangawai up to Pukekaroro is £1 5s. a ton in summer and £2 in winter—the latter on account of the state of the roads. I forgot to say just now with regard to stone that from 1903 to 1908 there was 47,262 pounds' worth of stone imported into New Zealand, chiefly, I think, from Australia. The Auckland Harbour Board are just about to put up a ferry-building at a cost of some £50,000 or £60,000, and it is their intention to import 10,000 pounds' worth of stone from Australia. The City Council, too, is building a town hall, and it has already imported bluestone from Australia at a cost of about £10,000.

*The Chairman:* But they might not select your stone. Some people are very particular.

*Witness:* That is so; but the report I have given you will prove that this is a very superior stone. With regard to the western route, I have here the petition presented by the advocates of the western route. In clause 4 they state, "That to the east of the present proposed line there are only some 900 people, who would be almost equally well served if a more centrally situated route were adopted." Well, that is very misleading. I have already told you that Hakaru, Mangawai, and Kaiwaka have a population of about 450, while Maungaturoto has some 500, and Waipu, close to, has 1,000. So that upsets that clause. Then, clause 5 has, I am afraid, misled Mr. McKenzie and all connected with this business. It reads, "That to the west of the present proposed line there are now 7,500 people, who will be practically prevented from making use of the railway when completed." If this were correct I should not have a word to say against the line being taken to the west; but it is altogether wrong. These 7,500 people are on the western side, of course. The bulk of them are on the Wairoa River. I want to point out that it is impossible for the Wairoa people to use this line if it is taken over the river at Young's Point. I have had this measured on the map by a surveyor, and the distance from Dargaville down to the Heads is forty miles, and from the Heads to Young's Point is thirty-six miles—seventy-six miles in all. Well, the distance from Dargaville to the Heads and to Helensville is seventy-eight miles—only two miles further than going up to Point Curtis. When they come to Point Curtis—if that route is adopted—they have then a drive of forty-two miles by railway before they get to Helensville. This, I am sure, has misled Mr. McKenzie and others.

4. Seven thousand people could not make use of that line?—That is so. What I suggested to Mr. McKenzie was that in place of this zigzag route the eastern route be adopted, so that the local bodies from Auckland to Pukekaroro would get the benefit of the stone; but instead of adopting the eastern route right through, make a deviation from here to here [points indicated on map and distances explained.] The only people who would suffer a little would be the people at Whakapirau; but there are three deep-water landings—at Whakapirau, Batley, and on the Otamatea River—and they are within five hours' steam of Helensville. The people from Raupo to Helensville get there in four hours. Now, it has been stated by the advocates of the western route that the freights to Kaipara from the south are 10s. a ton. That is perfectly true. They have the benefit of those freights, yet they are asking for this railway to be taken to the west. They know that the freights by the railway would average £1 10s. a ton. With regard to the quality of the soil, there is a splendid swamp here [indicated on map], of perhaps 40,000 acres; but, on the other hand, the whole of this country [indicated] is the very worst quality of soil you can get, being gum land, and a part of this peninsula [indicated] is the same. At Matakohē there is some very good country. It is all nonsense to talk of the soil on one side being better than on the other—I mean comparing west with east. It must be remembered, too, that the best fruit is grown on the poorest land. There are people at Port Albert on very poor land making a thousand a year out of their orchards.

5. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Does this hill in this photograph contain the stone that you have been describing to us?—Yes. It belongs to me.

6. Would this stone be used for ballasting either line?—Either, I believe; but you will understand that I do not really know what the intention of the Government is. I have heard that they propose getting ballast from the Wairoa River. As to the cost of the stone at Pukekaroro, I will guarantee that it can be quarried and put on the trucks at 3s. a yard. I will do it myself for that.

7. In one of these documents the statement is made that the cost of winning the stone would be so high as to make it dear for building purposes?—Oh, no! That stone can be put on the market in any of the towns in New Zealand and sold at a very much lower rate than the Melbourne stone.

8. *Mr. Buxton.*] With regard to Young's Point, where the railway crosses, we were given to understand in evidence yesterday that if the deviation were carried out boats would be able to come up to the railway to serve the whole of the country with produce, and there would also be an outlet for stuff produced in the district. Is that the same by the eastern route and the western?—The North Auckland line touches the Kaipara waters at Helensville.

NORMAN FINLAYSON, of Maungaturoto, made a statement. (No. 5.)

*The Chairman:* Will you make your statement now, Mr. Finlayson, as briefly as you can?

*Witness:* I will be as brief as possible. I represent the settlers of Maungaturoto on the Otamatea County Council and have done so for the last few years, and I have a telegram that I received from Waipu asking me to say a few words for them. When this western route was decided on we held a public meeting at Maungaturoto. It was the largest I have seen there, and the meeting was unanimous that it would be against the interests of the settlers of Maungaturoto and the interests of the whole Dominion to adopt the western line; and we decided at that meeting to oppose it, principally for the reason that our butter-factory, the mainstay of the settlement, is on the central road, with a level road. The western-route station would be away north, practically outside the Maungaturoto Settlement. So that for heavy goods we should still be obliged to use the