

waterway, which comes within 10 chains of the butter-factory. Besides, we were looking forward to getting metal from Pukekaroro delivered right through the centre of the settlement. As to the price of metal at present, a tender received last week for the supply of metal to the County Council was at 11s. 6d. a yard. So we decided to go through the mud rather than pay that. We had paid 8s. 6d. for it for the last two summers. Mr. McKenzie made a statement in the House that his only regret in adopting the western line was that it would take the railway a few miles further away from his friends at Waipu. He also stated that it would bring the line within easy distance of Whakapirau and Pahi. Well, any one who knows the place knows that Whakapirau has deep water, and that steamers can call there at any time. In fact, our passenger traffic at the present time goes through Whakapirau. I believe that Mr. McKenzie was not fairly treated when he came through the district. He came there a perfect stranger. He was met in Auckland by the people favouring the western route, and they were on his track, I may say, all the time. The matter was put in a one-sided manner to him. In regard to Waipu I should like to say a few words. When the first settlers came there fifty-five years ago a cutter could be run up five or six miles. Then it gradually closed up till it ran into a sand-flat; it closed up altogether as far as navigation was concerned. Then the settlers had a road made some fourteen miles to Masterton Point; but the sand drifted on to that, and it was not satisfactory in any case. The people had to be landed there any time during the night, and then had to coach fourteen miles through the sand to Waipu. Then they decided to try and open an entrance through the sandhills, and all the able-bodied men of Waipu worked a whole summer. They got it cut through, but a storm came and closed it up. The following winter an unusually high fresh came, and opened the entrance out and made it available for boats to come in; but owing to the shifting nature of the sand they could not use it unless they protected it with stone and fascines and so on. The settlers applied to the Government for assistance in this matter, and Mr. Hall-Jones went to Waipu and examined the place for himself. He sent two experts to report; but the experts could not recommend the spending of any money, on account of the shifting nature of the sand. Mr. Hall-Jones, however, told the people that the Government would find the money and assist them to keep the entrance open until they were able to avail themselves of this railway. They have been looking forward to this railway coming within fifteen miles; but Mr. McKenzie makes it eighteen, thus practically cutting them off altogether. When Mr. McKenzie was through, the Waipu people were quite satisfied. Sir Joseph Ward had two years ago said they would not be cut off from the railway, and, the railway having been determined by the Government to go through Maungaturoto, they did not think there would be any change made. I do not think the people mentioned the matter much to Mr. McKenzie when he was through, because they were satisfied it would not be shifted. I think they paid more attention to giving him a Highland welcome there.

FRIDAY, 3RD DECEMBER, 1909.

R. W. HOLMES, Engineer-in-Chief, Public Works Department, examined. (No. 6.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Will you make a statement, Mr. Holmes, telling us anything you know about this railway?—I would prefer to be examined.
2. *Mr. Mander.*] You remember, in 1907, Mr. Holmes being instructed to go and examine the country up there in regard to the various routes?—Yes.
3. You are familiar with this reference to the matter in the Public Works Statement of 1907?—Yes.
4. Is what is there stated a correct statement of the position?—Yes.
5. Is it not a fact that the railway already crosses the Kaipara waters in three places, at Te Hana, Topene, and Mainini—the railway crosses those three streams?—Yes.
6. If the people on the Wairoa side wanted to fetch the railway here [place indicated on map], would it not be a more sensible thing for them to bring it to this point [indicated], thus saving twelve or fourteen miles of railway?—They could not reach the railway-line quite.
7. A short branch would have to be made so that they could come at any state of the tide?—Yes.
8. Do you not think that is better than going to great expense and making this great curve [indicated], and so making the line longer?—If they were proceeding to Auckland they would save railage.
9. Fourteen miles of railage?—Yes.
10. You would catch all the Port Albert people as well, would you not?—That would depend upon the class of traffic you wished to divert that way. The water is much shallower.
11. It is not absolutely necessary that the bridge should cross at that point [indicated] in order to give the Kaipara people an opportunity of reaching the railway; they can reach it at this point [indicated] now at high-water?—In small boats, yes.
12. When you made that statement contained in the Public Works Statement, you were perfectly satisfied that you were correct in agreeing with Mr. Hales in regard to that route?—Yes.
13. Have you changed your opinion in any way since that date?—No. I still think, from an engineering point of view, that the eastern line is the easier line to construct.
14. When you made your examination of that route did you merely stand on the top of a hill and decide by observation which was the better route?—I looked over sufficient of the country to satisfy myself.
15. Is it not a fact that the engineers have been at work on that deviation through Bickerstaffe for some considerable time trying to find out a line for the railway?—Yes, we had a trial line surveyed through.