

16. You were present when Mr. Stewart gave his evidence yesterday?—Yes.

17. Do you think he exaggerated the position at all in regard to that route through Bickerstaffe?—I think he was a little on the large side in regard to his estimates, and the difficulty in connection with the magnitude of the bridge over the Otamatea.

18. Will that bridge not be altogether about 17 chains in length, including the fillings on both sides?—The exact length of the bridge is 1,200 ft.

[At this stage it was decided that members of the Committee should first examine the witness.]

19. *Mr. Buchanan.*] You were asked just now whether you had changed your opinion expressed in the portion of the Public Works Statement that we had read yesterday, and you replied somewhat in this form, "I still think, from an engineering point of view, that the eastern route is the cheaper"?—Yes.

20. How about from other points of view? Which is the better with regard to grade?—There is no difference.

21. From the point of view of cost of construction, what, in your opinion, would be the difference?—I think the eastern line would be the cheaper, but by how much I am not prepared to say.

22. Are you able to form any opinion as to whether Mr. Stewart's estimate of the difference—namely, £93,000—would be an overestimate or an underestimate?—I think it is an overestimate.

23. There would not be that difference?—No, not nearly that difference.

24. Do you happen to know anything of the mile and a half of slipping ground to which Mr. Stewart attached great importance?—I have been close to it.

25. Did you examine it sufficiently closely from an engineering point of view to form an opinion in accordance or otherwise with Mr. Stewart's?—Yes. I do not think what he said was exaggerated at all. I think it was a fair statement of the case with regard to the slipping ground.

26. What about the respective distances?—There is not much difference in the distances up to the point they were discussing yesterday—93 miles, I think it was.

27. *Mr. Pearce.*] Has there been a detailed survey of the proposed deviation—the western route—giving the quantities and everything of the kind?—No, not all the way. We have a detailed survey to a little beyond Young's Point.

28. That is just over the waterway?—Yes. Beyond that we have only a trial survey, in which the quantities can only be approximate.

29. What is the proposal of the Public Works Department as regards that bridge concerning which Mr. Stewart said it was proposed to fill a portion in and make a shorter bridge?—We have not considered that very fully, but if an embankment were made at all we should have to make it of rock or some material that would not slip.

30. How can you arrive at an estimate if you have not considered these questions?—It does not matter much either way. The cost would be about the same.

31. As shown on that map, there is a tremendous curve in that proposed deviation just where it crosses Young's Point. Is that anything like the real line?—It is not quite right here [place indicated.] It should be more direct.

32. Mr. Stewart made the statement that the grades must be worse on the western route than on the eastern because the railway at Young's Point goes down almost to sea-level, while on the eastern route it would keep up alongside the range all the way. Is that so?—No, they are just about the same. The total rises and falls on the two routes up to 93 miles are practically the same.

33. It was stated that you had to go into a ballast-pit, and from the eastern route this branch line would only be half a mile, while from the western route it would be about five miles: could you give us the exact distances?—Not yet. I am still having some survey-work done with a view to discovering some shorter route.

34. Would you think that is approximately correct—about four miles difference?—I am in hopes of being able to shorten it down to about three miles and a half.

35. You think it would be either three or four miles longer on the western route?—Yes.

36. Is it absolutely necessary that that ballast-pit should be tapped for use on the line and for the district as well? Is there no other supply to be got?—The only other supply that we know of is at Hukatere, on the Wairoa River.

37. Would that piece of line, three and a half miles long, be of use in any other way than to tap the ballast-pit?—No, I do not think so.

38. That would be added cost to the western route?—Yes.

39. *Mr. J. Duncan.*] Had you anything to do with the selection of the first route—the eastern route?—Yes, I examined it and reported in its favour, and the Government adopted my report.

40. What are supposed to be the advantages of the deviation?—I believe the advantages are that it will give better access to the inhabitants of the Paparoa district.

41. Does the railway, before it impinges on that branch of the Kaipara, touch any other portion of the Kaipara?—Yes, at Helensville.

42. How far below is that?—A little over thirty miles.

43. Helensville, then, actually serves the Kaipara people, does it not?—Yes, at the present time it does.

44. To get to the 93-mile peg, how many miles remain to be constructed from the present terminus?—The present end of the open line is at Wellsford, at 69 miles on the railway mileage. The railway is practically completed up to about 77 miles.

45. What is the distance from where the deviation starts to the 93-mile peg?—The deviation starts a little beyond the 77-mile peg.

46. Did Mr. Stewart, in giving us his estimate of £93,000, mean that it would cost that much more to get to the 93-mile peg by the western route than by the eastern?—I understood him to mean that.