

80. *The Chairman.*] I understand that from an engineering point of view you favour the east-coast route, as it will cost less and the line be easier made?—Yes.

81. And you think that the production on the east coast is about equal to that on the western route?—I would not be prepared to answer that.

82. *Mr. Mander.*] With regard to the bridge across the Otamatea River, do you not think it would be a mistake to block the navigation of that river if it could be avoided without great disadvantage? Do you not think it would be necessary, in the event of a bridge being put across that river, to have an opening span?—I do not think so.

83. Would you build the bridge high enough to allow of vessels going underneath it?—I would build it high enough to provide for the class of vessel that is likely to navigate the waters above Young's Point in future.

84. Do you know what class of vessel is already trading to Maungaturoto?—The principal vessels going up there are oil-launches.

85. Is there not also a steamer running there regularly?—I am not sure about that, but a scow goes up occasionally.

86. Will your bridge be built high enough to allow of a scow going under it?—No.

87. Do you think, in the face of probable extension of settlement and increased trade demands in the future, it will be wise to build a bridge across that river that will block scows from going up to such an important district as Maungaturoto?—The scows are dependent for their trade at the present time for timber, which will very shortly come to an end.

88. Is it not probable that other trades may arise in the future? Are there not likely to be big quarries developed at Pukekaroro? Do you not think there is a probability of other trades arising in future that may require other vessels to come up?—It would be cheaper to get stone at Wairoa by vessels than to go to Pukekaroro.

89. I presume, Mr. Holmes, that in deciding on the eastern route the engineers took all these matters into consideration that have been mentioned—the bad country at Bickerstaffe, the bridge across the river, and all these circumstances?—Yes, certainly.

90. And after finally considering all these matters they decided in favour of the eastern route?—Yes.

91. You consider, of course, that it would be an advantage to go *via* Pukekaroro for ballast?—Yes.

92. You could ballast your line much cheaper, I presume, if the railway went past there?—Yes.

93. You would save the $3\frac{1}{2}$ -miles connecting-line?—Yes.

94. You did not include these three miles and a half in making your estimate of £10,000 in the difference in cost of the two lines?—No.

95. If you reduced the distance of that short line to three miles and a half, that would make the cost about £35,000, and with the £10,000 that you estimated the difference would be £45,000 in favour of the eastern route?—No. The ballast-pit line would not cost £10,000 a mile. It would probably be less than half that.

96. At any rate, whatever it cost would be added to the difference in cost between the two lines?—Yes.

97. It would be a very great advantage, would it not, to go *via* Pukekaroro, for other reasons—for road-metal for the settlers and for ballast for the line, &c.?—Yes.

98. What do you reckon you could get ballast delivered on the trucks for at Pukekaroro, provided the line went that way?—About 3s. 6d. a ton.

99. And what do you suppose it would cost you from the Wairoa River?—About 7s.

100. And what would it cost to continue delivering it from Auckland, as you are doing now?—It has cost us about 6s.

101. Then, taking the line past Pukekaroro would mean a considerable saving in ballast alone?—Yes.

102. Is it not a fact that in various places the North Island Main Trunk line passes through bad country?—Yes.

103. Is it not the case with almost every line that some portions go through bad country in order to get to the good country further on?—Yes.

104. You have not made a careful estimate, have you, of the cost of the western route as far as McCarroll's Gap? You could not state definitely what the cost would be?—No.

105. It is merely an approximate estimate that you have made?—Yes.

106. Which line do you think would have the most acute curves?—They are about the same.

107. You are referring to the lines on this side of McCarroll's Gap?—Yes.

108. What do you think of them further onwards?—There is not much difference between them. We can locate a line to standard construction *via* either way with equal facility.

109. *Mr. Buchanan.*] What would be the radius of the curves?—Seven chains and a half is the sharpest curve we are using at the present time on the main lines.

110. *Mr. Mander.*] You cannot give any cost of the line further on?—No.

111. You are aware, I presume, that the country through which that line will pass from McCarroll's Gap is covered a good deal with water in the winter-time?—In places.

112. You do not understand anything about the population at all on the other side, do you?—No, I have not gone into that.

113. You are aware that the Wairoa River here [place indicated on map] is a splendid navigable water?—Yes.

114. Are you aware that the people here have for the last two years been getting a very large proportion of their produce delivered from the south, and that last year £14,000 import duty was paid on goods delivered here by southern boats and Australian boats?—I believe that boats have been delivering goods from Australia.