

76. In constructing a line in that Maungaturoto district, do you not think it a very wise thing to touch the deep waters of the Kaipara?—I think it is an advantage from a trade point of view.

77. Are there many miles of water-line that would be brought into communication with the railway by so touching the water? There are the whole of the arms of the Otamatea and down to the Kaipara—about twenty miles, is it not?—In a direct line, following the main Sound.

78. Then, following the water-line through the different bays, there would be very many miles indeed?—Very many more. I could not form an estimate, but there are very many miles.

79. There are many settlers on the waters of the Kaipara who would be brought within access of the railway if the deep water is touched at Young's Point?—Yes, there must be many settlers there who would reap an advantage from it.

80. From the time you leave Helensville you do not touch deep water until you reach Young's Point: is that so?—That is so. You do not touch deep water. You touch tidal water, but not deep water.

81. *Mr. Mander.*] You, I suppose, have read the Public Works Statement of 1907, where it speaks of this line?—Yes.

82. Do you think that the engineers and the Minister of Public Works on that occasion, in deciding in favour of the eastern route after all the evidence that had been taken—do you think they made a mistake?—I think they had not sufficient data before them.

83. Then, when Mr. Holmes says he went into the matter carefully and made all sorts of inquiries, you think that is not correct?—There was no survey of the western route at that time.

84. Is there sufficient data at the present time to come to anything like a definite conclusion with regard to the cost of the railway-line as far as McCarroll's Gap?—Sufficient survey-work has been done to enable a close approximate estimate to be arrived at.

85. Can you possibly form any estimate of the cost of that work through the bad country at Bickerstaffe?—Yes. Up to Wellsford the railway-line has been carried through slip country. We know what that has cost.

86. Do you not consider it would be a great advantage to have the line close to Pukekaroro for the purpose of getting ballast?—I think there is an advantage in being near Pukekaroro as far as ballast is concerned.

87. How many miles of railway will it take to get to the Pukekaroro ballast-pit from the western route?—About four miles, I expect.

88. The cost of that would have to be added to the cost of the western route?—If they went to Pukekaroro from the western route it would have to be added—not otherwise.

89. What is the difference between the mileage to McCarroll's Gap on the western route and on the eastern?—The mileage will be found to be about half a mile in favour of the western route.

90. The map we have here shows it the other way about?—I think you will find it is half a mile shorter.

91. Look at this map that we have here. It is shown as I say?—[Witness looks at map.] You must take the red figures here. They show the distances just about the same here [point indicated on map.]

*The Chairman:* Is that an official map—a correct map?

*Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie:* It is as far as we have got, but it is always liable to alteration, because various short-cuts and alterations in the line are made here and there, which may either lengthen or shorten it.

92. *Mr. Mander.*] Seeing that the eastern route has been laid out and authorised and fixed by Proclamation, and all the rest of it, do you think there are sufficient reasons for making this great change now, seeing that the cost of the two lines would be about the same and the length about the same, and you are going away from Pukekaroro ballast-pit, where you can get ballast much more cheaply than you can get it anywhere else?—I prefer not to answer that question.

93. What do you think the approaches to this bridge across the Otamatea would cost? Would they not cost nearly as much as the bridge-construction itself?—No, they would not cost anything approaching the cost of the bridge. They would cost very much less.

94. Would they not have to be built of rock?—They would have to be protected with rock.

95. Would it not be unwise to obstruct the current of the river by putting in fillings at all? Do you not think it would be better and cheaper to bridge it all the way?—I do not think it would be cheaper to bridge it all the way. It would not be cheaper, and it does not appear to be necessary, because a bridge of 800 ft. will not obstruct the tidal flow and will leave sufficient opening for any flood-water to get away.

96. You heard Mr. Stallworthy talk about the great advantage of touching the tidal water on the western side. Do you not think it would be an equal advantage to touch the water on the eastern side?—Yes, it would be very good to do so, if there were any water within convenient reach of the railway.

97. Does the railway touch the water on the eastern side at any point?—No.

98. How far is it away at the nearest point?—About ten miles.

99. And it crosses the tidal waters at Te Hana, Mainini, and Topuni, does it not?—Yes.

100. Do you know the point on the Whakapirau where one branch runs up to Wellsford and the other to Te Hana?—Yes.

101. You are aware that vessels can go there at any state of the tide?—I thought they probably could.

102. How far would that be from the Te Hana Station, approximately?—I could not tell you what the distance is.

103. Do you not think that would be the nearest point for all the people on the Wairoa River to catch the railway? Would it not be shorter for the people to go there than to go up the Otamatea?—Yes, less mileage.