

TUESDAY, 21ST DECEMBER, 1909.

CHARLES RANKIN VICKERMAN, Superintending Engineer, Public Works Office, examined. (No. 9.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Do you know the railway routes in question, known as the eastern route and the western route, for the trunk railway north of Auckland?—I know the earlier part. I may say I have not been up there for about three years.

2. Will you state all you know about the matter, or would you prefer to be asked questions?—I have no evidence to give. I am not interested in which route is adopted, and I am a Government servant, and do not feel at liberty to give anything more than you ask me for.

3. *Mr. Pearce.*] Have you any knowledge of the western route—the new route which has been fixed on?—I have not been over the western route as now fixed. When I was up there the western route went round the hill; now they are putting a tunnel through Ross Hill.

4. Have you any knowledge of that bridge that will have to be put over the waterway at Young's Point?—Yes.

5. Could you give a rough estimate of what it would cost to put a substantial bridge for the railway over that waterway?—It is going to cost from £20,000 to £25,000.

6. That would be for the bridge, without the approaches?—I do not think there will be any approaches much there. That, of course, is an uncertain quantity, because the design has not yet been made. It is only a guess.

7. It has been stated in evidence here that there is a piece of slipping country further on that will be very bad to maintain a railway in. Have you any knowledge of that?—I know about two miles of it.

8. What is your opinion with regard to that country?—It will slip.

9. The railway there will be very expensive to maintain?—I could not say what the future will be, but no doubt it will slip.

10. You know the eastern route?—Yes, as far as Pukekaroro.

11. Is Pukekaroro past the intended deviation?—Yes, it would be about eight miles from the deviation.

12. Do you know that route further than Pukekaroro?—I know it into Maungaturoto.

13. Are you prepared to express an opinion as to which route would be the more expensive to construct?—There has been no detailed survey of the western route yet. It was only a flying survey. The actual location of the line has not come to me. It may have been done in Auckland since I left.

14. It has been stated that they have already started construction on that western route: how can that be if they have no detailed survey?—For the first mile and a half the two lines run almost together.

15. Is it a right thing to start a deviation of that kind for some eighteen or twenty miles without having a detailed survey over the whole length?—It is not my business to settle that, sir.

16. *Mr. J. Duncan.*] Which is the more costly of the two lines to construct as far as you know them—for the same distance?—I have just replied that a detailed survey of the western route has not been completed and given to me.

17. You are not in a position to say?—I am not in a position to say definitely which is the more costly.

18. *Mr. Buxton.*] You do not know anything of the country that the eastern route passes through?—I know it as far as Maungaturoto.

19. Do you know anything at all as to the quality of the land on the western route?—I know about two miles of it on Bickerstaffe.

20. What would be your opinion of the quality of the land on either route—is it about the same?—It is quite different land.

21. You have mentioned that after leaving Young's Point there is a piece of very bad country on the western side?—I said it would slip; I did not say it was very bad.

22. Is there nothing of the kind on the eastern route?—Yes, on the eastern also there will be bad slips.

23. What is the distance between the eastern and western routes?—About three miles on the average.

24. *Mr. Buchanan.*] How far along the western route have you been?—I have been on the Bickerstaffe Estate.

25. You have been practically no distance along the western route at all?—I know the country, but I have not been on the railway route. You see, I have been away from Auckland for three years, and the western route has practically come into being since then.

26. You said that an estimate of the cost of the bridge across this waterway on the western route would be no better than a guess: would you not, as an engineer, be able to give a pretty near estimate, at so-much per foot, if you had a look at the place and knew the length to be bridged?—You would have to know what the bottom was like also.

27. Yes, I am presuming that?—You would need to have borings, and know the length and all that before you could come to any definite conclusion. And then you would have to know what sort of a bridge was wanted.

28. You have not got the details?—No. They have not been referred to me, at any rate. The Engineer-in-Chief may have some information, but I have nothing to do with it.

29. *Mr. Mander.*] You will remember in 1907 the line being fixed practically to Maungaturoto by the Public Works Statement?—Yes, I believe there was an outline given.

30. Were you at that time in favour of the authorisation of that line to Maungaturoto?—Well, I do not know much about the last three miles near Maungaturoto. There was never a proper survey made of either route when I was there. I only went up to Pukekaroro on the east and about two or three miles on Bickerstaffe on the west. For the remainder it was simply a casual walk-over and general report. There was no preliminary survey made at that time.