

146. I did not say so. Anyhow, when the engineers recommended the Government to pass this authorisation of 1904, the engineers were working on Mr. Knorpp's survey, because there was no other survey in existence?—That would be the guide they would take.

147. There was none other?—No.

148. And there was none other until eight months ago?—1908.

*Mr. Colvin:* I should like to ask Mr. McKenzie if the Department intend to have a survey made of these lines.

*Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie:* We have a trial survey of both lines now, and we have a location survey, too, as far as McCarroll's Gap, but we may alter it a little here and there.

*Mr. Forbes:* Would Mr. McKenzie tell us what has brought about the western deviation, after the Department had gone on practically past Kaiwaka?

*Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie:* As I have stated, the M to Z Petitions Committee last year recommended the Government, before going on with the line, to have a survey made of the western route. Then, shortly after I joined the Government last January, Cabinet got me to go up and examine both routes. I spent a month on the job, and when I saw the country I came to the conclusion that it would be a mistake to adopt the eastern route before the western route was examined, and I ordered a trial survey of the western route, as shown on that map. The trial survey was made, and the report of the engineers satisfied the Government that the western route ought to be adopted.

*Mr. Pearce:* Who made that report?

*Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie:* I made a final report to my colleagues.

*Mr. Pearce:* It was not an engineer's report, then?

*Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie:* The engineers were committed to the eastern route at this time, and did not like to have their ideas upset. However, the report showed that there were 41 more chains of tunnelling on the eastern route and 730 ft. more bridging.

*Mr. Mander:* Mr. Holmes contradicted that about the bridging.

*Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie:* No, it is in his own report. I include viaducts under the heading of bridging. There was a large viaduct right opposite Kaiwaka Township. Then there was a table attached to the engineers' report showing the rises and falls and the grades, and this table of rises and falls showed that for working afterwards the western route was much easier than the eastern. The engineers had no data to show which line would cost the more, because they had no surveys—in fact, the Engineer-in-Chief never saw the western route until he went over it with me. When I had finished going over the country I authorised the survey. The result was that all the Ministers were satisfied that the deviation was going to be the best in the interests of the country. Mr. Mander wants to make out that the red line on the map is not in the centre of the peninsula. Well, the peninsula is not very wide anywhere—in fact, as a private member I was opposed to the line at all, on account of the water being so close. The position is that from the point of deviation to the point of junction there are 618,000 acres on the western route as against 300,000 acres on the eastern. So that really the line would want to be shifted a good deal further west yet to get into the middle of the peninsula.

*Mr. Forbes:* What is the reference in the Public Works Statement of this year to a Royal Commission? Is it to take evidence about this line?

*Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie:* It is stated in the Statement that a Royal Commission will be set up in the recess to examine the line beyond McCarroll's Gap. Cabinet has already authorised the construction of the railway as far as McCarroll's Gap. Under the Railways Authorisation Act we can go as far as Maungaturoto. That is what we are working under now, and we have no intention of altering. But, as to the line beyond McCarroll's Gap, the reference that the Government will give the Royal Commission will probably be to ascertain whether it would not be advisable to connect this railway with the Whangarei Railway and save about fifty miles of construction by doing so. As I say, the Commission will also be asked to report as to which is the best route from McCarroll's Gap northwards.

*Mr. Stallworthy:* I should like to say a word or two, sir. It is this: This matter was before the Committee last year, when a petition signed by hundreds of people on the western side was considered, and the witnesses from the western side were all here and gave evidence, and the matter was fully gone into. On this occasion the inquiry was begun, and three witnesses were examined before I knew that it was being held at all. I did not hear the evidence of Mr. Stewart or the other witnesses, and was not informed that the meeting was being held at all; and I have not had a single witness here to give evidence on my side. All the evidence was heard last year, the witnesses going before the Minister of Public Works and the Premier. That is all I wish to say.

*Mr. Mander:* I would just like to say that Mr. Stallworthy has had a splendid witness in the Hon. the Minister on behalf of the west. I asked for quite a number of witnesses, but the only one I got was Mr. Vickerman, and I do not think he has said altogether what he thinks in regard to this matter. However, I want to refer you to this map. Mr. McKenzie has made a great deal of the matter of the population on the respective sides. As proposed by the Minister, the railway will cross through the Kirikopuni Valley here [indicated], and any one can see whether that is the centre of the peninsula or not. Maungatapere Parish is there [indicated], and any one can see that that is very nearly the centre; but the engineers are not keeping to that point. They are keeping in here [indicated], about 5 miles from that point; consequently the railway will be nearer the west coast than the east, and there is no land here [indicated] that would keep a rabbit to 10 acres. The good land is here [place indicated on map]. The calculation should really be made from the Wairoa River to the East Coast, and if the railway is taken where the engineers are laying it out, it will be taken as nearly through the centre of population as possible, and it will catch the people in the centre of population, where they are bound to patronise the railway.

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