

## MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WHANGAREI, TUESDAY, 11TH APRIL, 1911.

WILLIAM ANDREW CARRUTH examined. (No. 1.)

*The Chairman:* Probably it would be easier for you, Mr. Carruth, to make a statement.

*Witness:* I am a barrister and solicitor, practising in Whangarei, where I have been a resident for the last twenty-five years. I know something about the country all round about the County of Whangarei, and portions of the surrounding counties. With regard to the scope of this Commission, I wish to speak generally, especially to what I think is the second portion of the programme—namely, the connection between the Main Trunk North line and the line which is already opened running from Whangarei through to Kawakawa and on to Kaikohe. I think it would be highly advantageous to the interests of the Dominion that that connection should be proceeded with as early as it possibly can be. One of the reasons I give for this is that there is a length of line already in existence between Whangarei and Kawakawa, and branching off from Scoria Flat, on that line, towards Kaikohe: it is in course of construction, and being quickly carried on towards Kaikohe. I understand that that portion of the line will be completed in about two years' time, and I have no doubt that the further extension of that line to the waters of the Hokianga will be made, and, if so, will be done in about five years. Although I am not very well acquainted with the lands through which the extension to Hokianga will run, still, I am given to understand that it is a very easily constructed line. I think if that line is completed from Hokianga right through here, as I have little hesitation in saying it will be at the end of the time I have mentioned, I think it would be one of the chief reasons for completing the space between Whangarei and the main line in the vicinity of McCarroll's Gap. The line from McCarroll's Gap should be, I am told—of course, subject to engineering confirmation—extended a little further north, and it would make the distance then to Whangarei somewhere about twenty-four or twenty-five miles. If that line of railway were completed it would then bring the people not only of this county, but all the people of Hukerenui, Towai, and other villages on the line to Kawakawa and Kaikohe, and, of course, the people from the Hokianga waters, into immediate touch with Auckland and the southern portions of the Dominion. It would be then one continuous line, and I think it would be a payable line. It is a well-known fact that the returns from that portion of the line which has been open for a good many years have been entirely satisfactory. I think it has been sometimes the best and sometimes the second-best paying line in New Zealand, and I see very little reason why the extension of it, with the additional traffic that will come upon it from the settlements in the north, should not keep it nearly if not equally as good a paying line as at present. That line that I have mapped out from the Hokianga right down to Whangarei and into the vicinity of McCarroll's Gap is through fairly thickly populated districts. It would serve a great extent of country, and I think would be a remunerative line almost from the start. It seems to me a pity that a line should be brought up as far as McCarroll's Gap and, with a space of only twenty-four or twenty-five miles between them, it should not be connected with an already existing and payable line. I think, as a matter of business and commercial enterprise, it should be done, and I should say be done first. Personally, although my interests are with the eastern portion of this peninsula, I do not feel disposed to say that the Main Trunk North should stop at McCarroll's Gap or its vicinity.

1. *The Chairman.*] That it should proceed northwards by way of the Mangakahia Valley?—I do not want to stop the progress of that line by any means, but I think this connection of which I am speaking should be done first, as it is paramount in the interests of the country. I do not say that the other should not be done, because I verily believe that that is the shortest way to reach Kaikohe, and I think that the basis of railway-construction should be to have the line as short as possible, commensurate with the least expense in construction. As to whether it should go east or west of the Tangihua Mountains, I think that is more for the engineers to decide. Still, if I had to make my choice—and I do not want to speak as an expert—I should choose its extension through Maungakaramaea into the Mangakahia Valley.

2. That is, the eastern route?—Yes. I suggest that because I think there is the thicker population on that route, and I think it is only fair to those settlers who have taken up land there that the line which they had been led to believe for many years past would go through that country, and which has induced many people to settle there, should undoubtedly be made. Whichever route is decided upon, I think it will be some considerable time before it reaches a paying-point. I have a suggestion to make with regard to opening up the lands of the Mangakahia, which I would like to lay before the Commission, and which I hope will not be considered outside the scope of the Commission. It is that the people of Mangakahia would be well served if an electric line was run from the line which I suggest between a point beyond McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei. If such an electric line was run into the Mangakahia it would serve all the purposes for many years to come. It is just possible, too, that if that suggestion was acted upon it would save the construction of the main line further north. It is a well-known fact that the Wairua Waterfalls lie directly in the line of my suggested electric line, and if the power from those falls was properly harnessed I see no reason why we could not have a sufficient supply for the purposes of the Boroughs of Dargaville and Whangarei in respect to lighting and power to supply the