

factories and industries both in and about Dargaville and Whangarei and the other portions of the two counties of Whangarei and Hobson and the adjoining counties, and also to supply the power for this electric line which I suggest. I think that such a line could be worked very economically by this power. It would mean, of course, the proper harnessing of the present falls as they are now. It would mean an extension of the work there, but I think it would give a very reasonable and fair opportunity for the Government to carry out their ideas with respect to the use of these water-powers throughout the country. I think that should be one of the first things that they should begin their electric-power scheme with, those falls being so handy to so many places for so many purposes. Coming back to the line from Hokianga through Whangarei to the Main Trunk line, I think that such a line would be of immense benefit to the farming community in the north by enabling them to bring their stock not only to Auckland, but further south. I may say that stock is even now taken from Waby through to Auckland and further south, and the further the line is extended the greater are the facilities that would be offered. Of course, that argument would apply equally well to the central line as to the Hokianga-Whangarei line, but what we say is, that the people of the Dominion would have a more immediate benefit for many years to come from the linking-up of the Hokianga-Whangarei line with the main line.

3. *Mr. Coom.*] Do you consider that by the construction of the line to McCarroll's Gap from Whangarei the present shipment of stock would be diverted to the line?—There is a strong probability that with regard to stock it would.

4. And general merchandise?—I do not know about that. Water might carry that; but a very considerable number of passengers would go.

5. Can you give the Commission any idea as to the number of stock that might be carried?—No; I can only speak from hearsay.

6. You referred to the Whangarei line being one of the best-paying lines in the Dominion: is that not due mainly to the coal business?—Coal and timber, yes.

7. Would the coal business be diverted from the shipping if the line was constructed from here to McCarroll's Gap?—I do not say it would, but the supplies to people living along that line and further south would go by it. It would give a fillip to the consumption of coal.

8. Do you consider that it would divert the coal now being shipped to Auckland over the line?—I would not like to say that.

9. You advocate the main line being constructed as well as the diversion through Whangarei?—Yes, but at a slower pace. I think the connection between these two lines should be made first, and that the other should go on as the country can afford it.

10. When the main line is constructed as you recommend, would not all the traffic north of Kaikohe, and for some distance between Kaikohe and Kawakawa, be diverted over it?—No, because there would be plenty of country then to feed the two lines; but under present conditions the main line would be non-payable, because there is not the population to support it. That is why I say the central line should go slower in the meantime.

11. You recommend an electric line to Mangakahia. Is that because of the cheapness of construction?—Yes.

12. You consider that a small piece of electric railway between steam-working railways would be cheaper than to have the whole steam-worked?—Yes; it would go through settled country, and the settlers could avail themselves of the power along the line.

13. In what way would it be cheaper?—I have understood that electric power, where favourably generated, was the cheaper power.

14. Take the cost of construction, for instance?—I do not think it would be necessary to have such a finely constructed line as in Auckland. If the electric power is not going to be cheaper there would be no advantage in so constructing the line.

15. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What is the cost of freight between Whangarei and Auckland?—I think it is 7s. 6d. per ton. The passenger fare is £1 2s. 6d. first class, and 15s. second class.

16. Do you think that the railway from Whangarei to Auckland would be able to compete with a 7s. 6d. rate by water?—I think in the matter of freights the water-carriage would hold its own.

17. There would therefore be no benefit from bringing the train in to Whangarei?—For very many miles the line would be used for distributing goods from Whangarei.

18. In advocating the line from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei, have you not left out from railway-communication altogether a large area of country to be settled?—There is country to be settled there, but the railway would be of benefit to them, and there is also the Wairoa River, which I consider a splendid waterway.

19. What is the carriage from Whangarei to Mangakaramea?—I do not know. Some of the settlers would get their goods by the Mangapai River.

20. Do you know that the Government has in mind the electrifying of the whole of the North Auckland railways?—I cannot recollect having seen it mentioned; but I think my idea would be better than that.

21. Whangarei is talking about getting electric power in, is it not?—Yes, and also to supply Dargaville.

22. Would it not then be advisable to electrify the Main Trunk to Kawakawa?—It would be all right if they could get the power, but I do not know that there is the power at the falls for that.

23. Could not Whangarei, if it got in electric power, tap the districts that you have spoken of with electric trams, and so compete with the railway you advocate?—I hope so; but I think that should be a line run by the Government.

24. And therefore the railway you suggest, if made first, would have to compete with the electric trams of the future?—I think it would be a line that would stand for all time, and would be a very difficult line to compete with.