

Waipu fairly well with the line. That road has been graded for some time, and there has been communication through that way. It is a good road, and the distance is about thirteen miles. I should say that that would be the road for the Waipu settlers. It was put in by the Public Works Department and Mareretu Road Board for the settlers to get their goods to the boats.

3. *Mr. Evans.*] Which line of route carries the population—east or west?—I consider they are about equal so far as that part is concerned.

4. How would you deal with the Maori reserves on the western side?—There are none, I think, in that district.

5. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Have you ever heard any of the Waipu people agitating for the eastern or the western route?—No.

6. Is not the Waipu-Maungaturoto Road an even better graded road than the one you speak of?—Yes, but this one has been graded of late years.

7. That is the road which comes out just below McCarroll's Gap?—Yes.

8. Have you heard the distance given from Waipu to Maungaturoto?—No.

9. Maungaturoto is considerably nearer to Auckland than Mareretu?—Yes.

10. *Mr. Steadman.*] Taking a distance of seven miles on each side of the line going northwards, where does the greatest population lie?—I do not think there is much difference.

11. Drawing a line from the Gap to where the line junctions with Kaikohe, and taking seven miles on each side to Parakao, where does the greatest population lie?—I cannot speak of the population north of here.

12. Are there as many settlers in Maungakaramaea as there are in Waikiekie?—I cannot say.

13. You know nothing of the country north of this?—That is so.

14. Was not the Omano land locked up because of the owners being absent from New Zealand?—It may have been.

15. One part of that land was education reserve and another part belonged to absentee owners?—Yes.

16. If that had been Crown land, would it not have been taken up and settled long ago?—I should say so.

17. It has not been kept back altogether because of the railway?—No; but the railway would improve it considerably.

18. What value would the railway put on the land?—It is worth £4 per acre now, and if we had a railway I predict it would be worth £9 per acre at the least.

19. The railway would put £5 per acre on all the land in that district?—I should say it would.

20. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Was Omano not held by the Kauri Timber Company for cutting purposes for many years?—I believe it was.

21. So that was one reason why it was not opened up for settlement?—No doubt that kept it back.

JAMES THOMPSON WALKER examined. (No. 58.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, residing at Maungakaramaea, where I have lived for thirty-two years. I hold 180 acres of freehold.

2. Will you make a statement to the Commission?—I am in favour of the eastern route. My reasons are that on the western route leaving Waikiekie it takes up a creek called White's Creek, which has a very slippery formation. The land on the western route is only fit for grazing purposes, being very rough. The land after leaving Waikiekie on the western route for the first thirteen or fourteen miles has only one family resident on it. If there was a station at Tauraroa it would be very little used except for stock. Taking the eastern route, the line goes through better country—more level country suitable for agricultural purposes. For thirteen or fourteen miles—say, to the Tangihua Block or Waikiekie—there are fifty families within about a mile of the proposed line, three schools, three public halls, and three churches. I presume that on the eastern route there would be a station at Tauraroa on Mr. Gunson's property, and the station there would be very useful, and put through a lot of work. When I was at Mangapai last month there were 70 tons of goods for Maungakaramaea on the wharf. That quantity was landed in one week. I should also say that there is a station in the Tangihua Block which will be a very important one, being in touch with Maungatapere, Whatitiri, and Poroti. By going on the eastern route the line to connect with Whangarei would be very much shortened. There is also very good ballast in Maungakaramaea—scoria ash or surface stone—which could be crushed.

3. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] In what part of Maungakaramaea is your farm?—Opposite the township.

4. Were you in Maungakaramaea yesterday?—Yes.

5. What is the reason you did not give evidence there?—It was late when I got into the township last night, and the Commission were just about finishing their business.

6. Did any one ask you to give evidence here?—Yes—Mr. Crawford and Mr. Miller.

7. Did any other person who does not live in Maungakaramaea ask you to give evidence?—I cannot say there was.

8. Do you not think it is rather a large proportion to give three schools for fifty families?—In that count of fifty families I only included those who are living within one mile of the proposed railway-line.

9. What are the schools?—Maungakaramaea and Tangihua Blocks 1 and 2.

10. I presume Maungakaramaea School is a full-time school?—Yes.

11. Are the others full-time schools?—They are half-time schools. One is joined on to Maungatapere and the other to Tangiteroria.

12. With reference to those 70 tons of goods coming into Mangapai for Maungakaramaea, what was the nature of them?—Basic slag, phosphates, flour, and oats.