

would receive their goods at the same rate all the year round: have you any knowledge of the roads there?—I referred to the water communication. I did not refer to the roads at all.

27. Did you mean that the settlers inland would be at a disadvantage on the eastern side as compared with the western side?—No. Both are in the same position inland away from the river.

28. The land on the eastern route is just as good as the land on the western?—I think it would average just as good.

29. I take it you mean that the large areas of gum lands on the eastern side, which possibly may not be so good as the land on the western side at the present time, are ploughable, and may be brought into profitable cultivation in the future?—Yes, but there are large areas of gum lands on both sides.

30. *Mr. Coom.*] In one part of your evidence you contended that the central route is to be preferred to a Whangarei connection?—For opening up the country and as a Main Trunk railway certainly, because you will open up the centre of the country.

31. But you suggest that the Whangarei connection should be ultimately made?—Yes, or simultaneously with the present construction.

32. You then say that the western route at Kirikopuni is seventeen miles from the west coast, twelve miles from the Kaihu Valley Railway, and thirty-three miles from the east coast?—Yes.

33. Is not the east coast served by the Whangarei-Kawakawa Railway and by Whangarei Port?—Yes, just as the other side is served by the Wairoa River and the Kaihu Valley Railway.

34. If the Main Trunk was somewhere near Waikiekie, and a branch line was made from Maungakarama to Whangarei, would not that serve the eastern part of the Tangihuas?—I think it would, but it would not serve the people in the far north in the future as they should be served.

35. You speak of the necessity of the Main Trunk following the shortest route without deviation?—Yes.

36. And on that ground you argue that the eastern route is the one to be adopted?—Yes.

37. Do you know how much shorter it is than the western route?—I cannot say.

38. Do you think there is a mile of difference?—I would not like to say.

39. If there was a mile of difference, would that be material to the people in the north?—No.

40. You gave us some statistics as to the population and the number of cattle, sheep, and so on: have you any idea of the increase or decrease on the western or eastern sides as shown since that time you quoted?—No, but I believe it will be seen there is a greater increase on the eastern side when the statistics are published.

41. You know the land on the west of the Tangihuas?—Yes.

42. Is there more land to be opened up there than on the east?—I think there is, but of course it will be held in large areas, mostly because it is more suitable for that.

43. You say that the land on the west of the Tangihuas, especially north of Kirikopuni, is not suitable for settlement in small areas?—Not all of it.

44. How far north does that extend?—Right to the Hokianga waters, with the exception of some land at Kaikohe and some flats in the gullies; but the most of that country is broken.

45. When you come to six or seven miles north of the Tangihuas that will apply to the eastern as well as the western route, because the two lines junction somewhere about Parakao?—Yes.

46. Then there is only the land between Kirikopuni and about seven or eight miles north which will be affected by the western route and not by the eastern route?—That is so.

47. So there is only a small area of land not suitable for closer settlement on the western route?—There are considerable portions north of Kirikopuni Crossing, but I think that south of Kirikopuni there is a larger area suitable for small settlements than there is north.

48. Are you not aware that the river-flats are good country?—Yes.

49. That will be served by the western route better than by the eastern route?—It will be served by the Wairoa River.

50. Will it not be served by the western route in preference to the eastern?—Not all of it. It is inconceivable to me that the trade will ever come up the Wairoa River to feed the railway. They have such beautiful water communication with Helensville. They will drive stock to the railway only.

51. And the people would not travel by railway: you think they would rather go by boat?—I think so, because the river is not an open sea-way, and those in close proximity to the river will use it.

52. You think they will change at Helensville into the railway?—Yes. In my opinion, when the railway gets through the steamers will come into competition with it. They will reduce the fares, and try to run against the railway.

53. Do you know what interest the steamers are paying on their capital to-day?—I do not.

54. Do you know if they have paid any interest in the last twenty years?—I do not think they have paid much.

55. Do you know if they have paid any?—According to Mr. Mitchelson they have not. But the population will probably increase, and other people will come in and manage the companies better.

56. You say you object to the big waterways being obstructed by bridges?—Yes.

57. At what height do you think it would be necessary to erect the bridge at the Kirikopuni crossing of the Wairoa River?—I suppose the height of a scow's mast—30 ft., perhaps.

58. You think it is necessary that scows should go beyond Kirikopuni?—I think so. It is necessary that all the waterways should be kept open, because we do not know what is going to happen in the future.

59. You think 30 ft. in height would be sufficient?—I think so.

60. You said very definitely that if the line was constructed as originally laid out it would be cheaper by £100,000?—I was speaking of the whole line, not the deviation from McCarroll's Gap. They deviated about two miles out of their course to go to McCarroll's Gap to start with.