

67. If the Main Trunk line is brought northwards, and a branch is put in to go through Maungakarama and then into Whangarei, would that not meet the requirements of that good land you have been speaking of on the eastern route?—No.

68. Which part would be left out?—Most of it. I should say if the line came it would go up the Otaika Valley.

69. I mean the line that would go through Maungakarama, and from there to Whangarei?—I do not know how you would put such a line through.

70. A trial is now being made to take the line midway between the present eastern and the present western route down to the Wairoa River, and from there the proposal is that the branch line should go right through Maungakarama into Whangarei: if that were adopted, would such a system not meet the requirements of the good land you have mentioned on the east?—I think not. The good land lies over to Whatitiri.

71. Is Whatitiri on the extreme distance away from it?—Yes, Whatitiri extends to Poroti.

72. How far would Whatitiri be from the railway then?—From six to seven miles.

73. *Mr. Ronayne.*] How far is Whatitiri from Whangarei?—Fourteen miles from Whangarei would get round the whole of it.

74. From Whatitiri in a north-westerly direction towards Parakao, I understand, there is no land to consider—not sufficient to warrant a railway?—I should think not. A great area of it is poor land.

75. So that the only land that should be considered by the railway is that lying between Whatitiri and Mangapai and Maungakarama and Whangarei?—Yes.

76. *Mr. Steadman.*] What about this land that lies at Purua and Aponga: would not that be served by the eastern route?—There is not a great deal of good land until you get a long way down the river.

77. Out towards Hikurangi is the land the same?—Yes; there is good land there, but it is as near to the Whangarei Railway.

78. Is it not twenty miles from Purua to Hikurangi?—No.

79. How far is it?—There is a kind of road there, and it is ten miles.

80. How far from Mangakahia River is this land?—About ten miles; about twenty miles through.

81. How far is it to Ramarama down Lambert's Road?—I should say about ten miles.

FRANCIS CHARLES EWEN examined. (No. 67.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a Crown Lands Ranger, with headquarters at Auckland.

2. Are you prepared with a statement?—No. I have a plan here, with some information from the office.

3. You might please just state the number of Crown tenants on the eastern and western routes?—On the western route at Tangiteroria there are eight Crown settlers, and nearly all the tenures are occupation with right of purchase; at Mangakahia there are thirty-three Crown settlers; at Parakao there are twelve Crown settlers. There are also a number of settlers here who have bought out their freehold. At Tutamoe and Waimatanui there are sixty-nine settlers. On the eastern route there are twenty-two Crown tenants at Whatitiri, under occupation with right of purchase. All the Crown settlers I have referred to are under occupation with right of purchase.

4. *Mr. Evans.*] Do you know the country well?—I was in the country two and a half to three years twelve years ago, and I know from McCarroll's Gap northwards on the eastern route.

5. You know the country between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei, I suppose?—Yes.

6. Do you know the proposed line?—I remember twelve years ago seeing some pegs, and asking what they were, and settlers told me that they were railway, to indicate the direction the line was going.

7. From your knowledge of the land, which is the best land?—I should say there is more good land on the western route than on the eastern route.

8. What sort of land is it between McCarroll's Gap and Whangarei?—Poor country, with the exception of a few river-flats here and there. Speaking generally, the country is poor.

9. Would it serve many settlers if the line was made?—Yes, a good many.

10. Do you think it would be a payable line?—I hardly think it would.

11. Do you think the western line would be a payable line?—The one shown on the plan, I think, would be a payable one.

12. *Mr. Steadman.*] You talk about Whatitiri: is that the only land the Government has cut up there that has been taken up under the occupation with right of purchase?—There may be some other Crown lands there. Tangihua is almost on the western route.

13. Is not a good part of the line on the northern side of the Tangihua Range?—There are some Crown sections there, but not many. That is where I mentioned a good many of the tenants had bought the freehold of their holdings.

14. You would have no record of them?—No.

15. How many are there, do you think?—Fifty or sixty, at a rough guess.

16. Then a little farther north there has been a lot of land cut up on the Mangakahia River in times past. That has been bought out, has it not?—No. There are a good many left who have not bought out their holdings.

17. Could you give us an estimate of the number?—No.