

Company came along and took over all these properties. That land was held by the Kauri Timber Company until three or four years ago, when it was sold to Mr. Niccol, who has recently sold it at a large profit to other people.

38. That is only one block?—It is the principal block in the lot. It comprises 12,000 acres, and contains the best land in the Wairoa.

39. That is the Omano?—Omano, Tauroa, and Tauraroa.

40. That does not apply to the land on the eastern route?—No; most of the land on the eastern side is in the hands of small people.

41. You do not think there is any more land there to be taken up?—There is land that would be taken up if it was roaded. None of the gum land is occupied at present.

42. You think it will be taken up?—Every bit of it.

43. All the gum land near Auckland is not taken up yet?—It is being taken up.

44. But it has had a railway for thirty years?—Yes; but the people had the idea that gum land was absolutely useless.

45. Could a man take it up without capital?—No.

46. It would require a capitalist?—A man would require to have some money. When the Government drained the raupo land at enormous cost, and cut it up at £1 10s. an acre, it was taken up by men without means, and a considerable area of it has gone into the hands of capitalists.

47. Would it not require more money than to take up bush lands?—Yes, because once you fell the bush you can have it in grass in a few months. The other would be more costly.

48. You have an objection to the western route because it would require a swing-bridge across the Wairoa River?—I say that a swing-bridge would impede the traffic.

49. You have no objection to a swing-bridge as a bridge?—No.

50. It is used every day in engineering?—Yes.

51. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Is there not a very large stretch of land between Walton's and Tokatoka and between the Wairoa River and Waikiekie?—There was a large area of land there cut into 40-acre blocks in the Provincial Council days and given to soldiers and settlers, and it is only recently that that land has become available, because it was held largely by the Kauri Timber Company and others for timber purposes. But there have been settlers there who took up the 40-acre grants.

52. You agree that the distance from Mititai to the Upper Mangonui Bridge is about twenty-one miles?—That is so.

53. Would that twenty-one miles of country be served by the Wairoa River?—Not quite to the back.

54. How far would it?—I say you cannot take a railway to serve any particular point. Take the eastern route from McCarroll's Gap, where I believe it is to go through, and divide the space of twenty-one miles, that would give ten miles and a half to the sea. Surely that distance cannot be considered excessive.

55. You agree that provided the western route is adopted there will still be ten or eleven miles of country to be served by that railway which would not be served by the river?—Yes.

56. That applies until you get up close to the Tangihua Mountains?—Yes. On the other hand, you have to take into consideration the enormous area that lies to the northwards of the Tangihua Mountains.

57. Do you think that the settlers living, say, ten miles off from Mititai or Tokatoka would take their goods to the river and on to Helensville and there tranship to the train rather than take their goods fifteen miles to the railway?—Yes; if the cost by river was less than by railway they would take their goods to the water.

58. You know something about the roads?—They are vile.

59. Do you know anything about the roads between McCarroll's Gap and the Tangihuas?—There are none. One of my great arguments all along has been the great benefit the settlers would derive from the railway as a means of bringing them in metal.

60. At the present time that extent of country, which is twenty miles wide, for a good deal of the distance is practically unroaded?—Yes, and will remain unroaded until the railway brings metal.

61. So that in order to develop that country it is absolutely necessary to have a railway?—Yes. The bringing-in of bone-dust and manures would also develop the country.

62. Do you agree or do you not with the statement made by Mr. E. Harding and the valuer for the northern district that from Otamatea County to Hokianga is a stretch twenty-five miles wide of uniformly good country?—I should say there is very little bad land there.

63. You would also agree that such country would pay to put a railway through?—No, I would not say that. I say you should put a railway through the country that is going to be the most useful to the Dominion as a whole, and by putting it through the western route you will limit the area to be developed by the railway. I have a knowledge of the district that Mr. Harding does not possess. I question very much if he has been to the valleys to the north and north-east of Mangakahia River.

64. How far from the Whangarei-Kawakawa line are the districts to the north-east of the Mangakahia River?—In a straight line, they are not very far, but there are valleys to be opened up, and there is a fairly big range between. It would be easier to go to the line in the Mangakahia than to go to the other.

65. Where would you get the best connection through the Mangakahia?—At the bottom of the Nukutawhiti Range.

66. Is that not practically where the eastern and the western routes junction?—I think they would junction somewhere about Parakao. All the land, with the exception of the Nukutawhiti Block, from the Hikurangi River extending right through to Kaikohe, is owned by Natives, with two or three exceptions.