

94. Which line would you advocate from a business point of view—a line which traverses medium to first-class land or a line that traverses poor gum land, medium and good?—If the area was greater on the one last mentioned I would take it there, certainly. I maintain that the eastern route will open up all this land you speak of, because the distance between the junction and the river is so small, excepting that the railway would not go there and would not benefit the owners of the land. Along the western route the railway benefits the owners of the land; but taking it every way, the advantage is so small that the eastern route, to my mind, is essentially the best.

95. In speaking of the western route you say there would be so many districts on the eastern side of the Tangihuas shut off?—You would absolutely cut off everything on the eastern side of the Tangihua Mountains.

96. You have not taken into consideration the water communication on the Whangarei side?—That is down at Whangarei, and that is a good way from the Tangihuas.

97. You would not include the whole country?—Certainly not right down to Whangarei. But the eastern side of the Tangihuas is a long way from Whangarei even in a straight line—it is fourteen or fifteen miles as the crow flies.

98. In reference to the bush north of Kirikopuni, it has been stated that if the line was commenced from Kirikopuni northwards the royalty on the timber on the Crown lands would build ten miles of the railway?—I absolutely do not agree with that. It is a wild statement, and the way to refute it would be to get the information from the Crown Lands Office.

99. You made a statement that all the timber was likely to go by water: is it not a fact that much of the softer timber is lost through putting it in the creeks?—White-pine certainly. It is a timber used largely for boxmaking in Australia more than in New Zealand. If you do not get it away from the stump in three or four months it starts perishing from the end and rots inwards. Millions and millions of feet have been lost through putting it in the creeks and waiting for a flood.

100. Putting in the railway would save all that loss?—It is a question whether they can afford to pay the freight. It is a low-priced timber.

101. *Mr. Steadman.*] When speaking of the Hikurangi district being served by the railway you did not refer to the Hikurangi Settlement?—No, I was speaking of the valley of the Hikurangi River. There is no settlement there at all except of Natives. It is another area of land held by Natives that has never been surveyed or put through the Native Land Court.

102. What would you call the centre line of the country? Would you call it a line midway between Wairoa River and Mangapai?—I would take it as near the centre as possible. I would not get it away from the waterway. I think the line originally laid down by myself and Mr. Knorpp in 1885 is the best for the Dominion.

103. *Mr. Coom.*] That line is still further east than the line we are considering to-day?—Yes, that was news to me the other day. As I understand it now, the line that is called the eastern route is not so far away from the proposed western route as I thought it was.

104. *Mr. Steadman.*] Do you not think that the country lying to the north and east should be considered in getting railway communication with Auckland just as much as the land that lies to the south and west?—Certainly. I have maintained that all through.

105. I suppose that stock shipped from Mangapai that have to go out through the open sea run more risk than stock shipped in the Kaipara Harbour?—Yes.

106. So the people living on this north-eastern line would be just as interested in getting the Main Trunk connection with Auckland as the people in the south-west, and should be considered?—Certainly they ought to be considered, but I say the existing population is not a factor. The factor, to my mind, is what is going to be of the greatest benefit to the Dominion in the future. Everybody knows that the people at Whangarei and Dargaville and all these places have gone there because of the easy facilities.

107. *Mr. Evans.*] With your experience, what does it take per acre to lay bush country down in grass?—I should think, £3 per acre.

108. How many sheep to the acre will the northern bush country carry when laid down in grass?—From two to two and a half; in some places three. Some of the rich flats will carry four.

109. You say if the line of railway either east or west were constructed metal would be obtainable for road-making?—Yes, sufficient to road New Zealand.

110. Have you any idea what amount of stock and goods are exported from the Wairoa River district: you say the river would compete with the railway?—I say the sea competes now; and it will not be so very long before the river and the coast compete with the railway by carrying away the produce produced in the Northern Wairoa district over the sea to England. It will not travel by rail at all. The Hobson County is a rich county. It has a patch of poor land. It has also a patch of medium land extending from opposite Tokatoka down to the Heads, but every inch of it is better than the land I have magnificent pasture on now.

111. Is the land at Nukutawhiti all Maori land?—No, the bulk of that land is owned by the Finlayson brothers.

112. How do you account for so little land being cleared and so few settlers on the land?—Want of facilities for getting to and from their sections. It is a marvel to me that so many people have gone up the Mangakahia district, considering the bad roads they have to travel in winter-time to get to Whangarei. The same thing applies to Dargaville.

113. I understand you are not in favour of continuing the Whangarei line to junction with McCarroll's Gap?—Certainly not, until the Main Trunk is through.

114. You would be in favour of it then?—Yes.

115. *The Chairman.*] You are quite satisfied in your own mind that the Main Trunk line, if taken by the east route to Mangakahia and from there on, would be a paying proposition to the Dominion?—I am certain it would.