

4. Do you advocate the pushing-on of the line?—Yes; right through to Kaikohe and Hokianga. I think the talk about an electric railway in the Mangakahia Valley is only a gag to tickle the Mangakahia Valley settlers. It would never pay.

5. What are your views in reference to the connection between the Main Trunk line, or McCarroll's Gap, and Whangarei on one side, and to the Wairoa on the other?—I think the Main Trunk should be put right through first. If they start putting in branch lines it will never get through here in our day.

6. *Mr. Becroft.*] Are you satisfied that it would be a good business proposition to push the railway through?—Yes.

7. Settlers will be induced to take up land when the railway comes?—There are thousands of acres lying idle because of the want of a railway. The trouble is that we cannot send anything away, and therefore have to confine ourselves to the raising of stock.

8. Is that land open for selection at the present time?—Part of it.

9. Why is it not taken up?—Because it is too far back, and no one will go in to it. I am the only white man with a family in the Upper Mangakahia Valley. In the lower Mangakahia Valley, some four miles nearer Whangarei, three small families have settled very recently.

10. If the railway is put through the country will advance very rapidly?—Yes. They are rushing the Native land now.

11. *Mr. Evans.*] Are there many large blocks held by syndicates?—No; it is pretty well all Crown land. There is one block of 12,000 acres held by Finlayson Brothers. That is the only one.

12. Have you any idea of the amount of Government land here?—I could not say.

13. Is the land open for sale?—Some of it; but some is not surveyed.

14. How is it held?—Under the optional system.

15. *Mr. Ronayne.*] What would you send over the railway when it is completed?—Timber, and produce of all kinds. We can grow fine wheat and oats in this country. Thirty years ago it grew fine wheat, but the growing of it was stopped by the Natives. I have seen good corn grown here myself. We can grow 10 tons of potatoes to the acre without manure on these flats.

16. Do you grow all the potatoes required for your own use here?—The Natives have got all the level flats; but after the blight came the storekeepers had to procure potatoes from the south.

17. Could you give us, approximately, the amount of good timber there is here?—About 50,000,000 ft., I should say.

18. What way will the timber go?—By rail to Auckland.

19. *Mr. Evans.*] Did I understand you to say that the Natives had all the flats?—Yes.

20. *The Chairman.*] There is a good market for timber in the Wairoa?—Yes.

21. If the railway were started for Kirikopuni, would this timber go out by the Wairoa?—I dare say part of it would.

22. It would be more likely to go there than be carried the whole road by rail to Auckland?—I do not think so. There is a better market for white-pine and rimu at Auckland than anywhere else.

23. *Mr. Steadman.*] Would it be milled here?—It would be sent out both milled and in bulk.

EDWARD JOHN MULHERN examined. (No. 39.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer at Mangakahia, where I have resided for about nineteen years. I am in favour of the proposed route *via* the western side of the Tangihuas, in contradistinction to the eastern route. By such a route we will have a line that will tap the most fertile land in this peninsula—the country that will carry the biggest population, and one that will be in every sense of the term a Main Trunk line, because it practically takes the centre of the country. We do not altogether depend upon our agricultural or pastoral products. We have vast timber-areas still untouched. We have minerals, copper phosphates, a large coal-seam near Avoca, about ten miles from Parakao, and I could not exactly state the number of industries that may be established in this valley by reason of the water-power available. We have the highest fall of water in the North Island in the Nukutawhiti Block, with a good flow of water. The fall is 410 ft. As regards the timber trade, I would not say that most of it will go to Auckland, because no doubt mills will be started at Kirikopuni, and perhaps local mills on the line, but I should say that the export trade will be to Auckland for many years to come.

2. How is this area of land adapted for dairying?—Very well indeed.

3. Would the line through here help dairying?—Yes. We have four or five hundred cows, and that number could be increased to four or five thousand in a very short time. In the Opouteke Valley there are 150,000 acres adapted for dairying; in fact, right through to the Awakino at Waimatanui, extending back to Taheke, there is also a great extent of dairying-country. There is anything up to 150,000 acres running into the Wairoa watershed. The hills all round here are admirably adapted for sheep, and as for flats, you can see them for yourselves. In my opinion, it is a matter of national importance to construct the line on the lines I have enunciated.

4. *Mr. Becroft.*] Have you any idea whether the eastern or the western route would provide the greater quantity of timber?—The western, without any doubt.

5. What would the proportion be?—Four to one. There are 300,000,000 ft. of untouched timber on the western route.

6. Are you satisfied that when that timber is cut out the agricultural and pastoral industries will so develop as to make this line a paying proposition?—Yes.

7. *Mr. Coom.*] How many acres to the cow would you want in the Opotiki and Awakino?—Three acres to the cow.

8. How many sheep will it carry?—Two and a half or three to the acre.