

46. That is an average of 225 tons a week, and is a very small out put—are you aware whether it is being increased, because on that depends very largely the question of the amount of traffic which will be on the line?—It will be increased during this year as the Government have accepted the tender of this Company for supplying the locomotives.

47. Have you any knowledge yourself of the future capabilities of the mine in the way of out put?—No; I do not know anything about the mine.

48. *Mr. Barron.*] I find that this line seems to have been worked under an agreement arrived at under authority of section 9 of the "Railways Authorisation Act, 1884"—I presume that the whole of the the agreements that were then in existence were made legal after that Act was passed?—We considered it so—we might have written all these letters over again, and asked the Company to assent to them, but it did not seem necessary. The arrangement could be dropped at any time if either the Government or the Company wished. The Public Works Act prevents the running of the agreement for more than twelve months.

49. Does the agreement work satisfactorily?—Yes.

50. Is it convenient to the public?—Yes; it is worked just as a Government line.

51. If the Government acquired the line you would consider it necessary to sanction some further expenditure on it?—I do not know of any, except that I believe the public have asked two or three times for a station waiting shed, that would cost about £60 or £80—I do not know of anything more than that.

52. The accommodation which the public have asked for has not been granted by the Company?—No.

53. The Company not thinking it would be a profitable thing to do?—I do not know what their reasons are, they may not have been asked.

54. And the expenditure over the line as belonging to the Government would probably be very much greater than when belonging to the Company?—There would be no difference at all—it is worked as a Government line now.

55. Such an application as you have referred to would most likely agreed to?—If the Government had the line, I think they would consider it reasonable to give a small shed of that class, but I do not know of anything else.

56. I understand you to say that the Government might net £300 a year by this purchase?—No; I was asked the question what it was worth to the Government; I said I thought it was worth that—it would net just the same as now.

57. What does it net now?—That is not easily estimated on a small piece of line such as this—it is an advantage to the Government I have now doubt, but to express it in pounds shillings and pence is not an easy matter; Mr. Ballance has suggested that I should give the cost of working the Branch as a whole, and then we can take a part of that result proportionate to this piece. I merely mentioned £300 a year as my opinion of what the line might be worth, without going into any calculation at all.

58. *Dr. Newman.*] Is that £300 a year over and above working expenses, or is it merely gross takings?—Well, I should say it is an advantage to the Government—I am only giving an opinion without having gone into figures, and the opinion might possibly not be correct.

59. *Mr. Dargaville.*] In addition to that it affords facilities to settlers and others in the district?—Yes; it undoubtedly affords facilities to the district.

60. Do I understand you to say that it is a line which might also with advantage to the public be extended?—I understand that is the case—that it can be made part of an extended line going farther inland through good country—on that point the Engineer-in-Chief could best inform the Committee.

61. *Mr. Barron.*] I do not gather that the Government have any right to purchase this line either under the "Public Works Act of 1882", or under the "Railways Authorisation Act 1884"?—No; they have no right.

62. Then if the Company refused to sell there is no means by which the Government could acquire the line?—I think not; if the Company refused to sell I do not think the Government could force them.

63. That is the difference between this and the District railways?—Yes; but possibly the Government might take the line under the Public Works Act as being required for their own railways, but that is a legal question.

64. *The Chairman.*] The next of these lines is the Whau Whau Branch Railway. What is the condition of that line?—It is more of a siding than a railway—a siding off the Whangarei Kamo line. It was constructed I understand under the same Act, by the Government at the expense of the Company, and it is made from the Whangarei Kamo line to Whau Whau coal mine. The Government made an agreement in 1884 to run their locomotives and trucks up to this siding and take away the coal. The branch is maintained at the expense of the Company, the Government merely carrying away the coal in their own trucks, and charging the freight to the public.

65. Do you know the condition of the line?—It is a fairly constructed line and in good order.

66. It is estimated to have cost £6544—do you consider that a fair price?—I have no means of estimating the cost now.

67. Do you know the extent of the traffic upon it?—I do not know.

68. It is stated that a months traffic was 223 tons, which at 2s a ton would yield a yearly revenue of about £1320?—I do not think that the traffic can have been 10,000 tons a year, but I am not prepared to say now. I will supply particulars.

69. It is also stated that a platform near the line would make it additionally useful to the neighbourhood?—I do not think that the Government would be very much disposed to run passenger traffic to a siding of that description—it is a mere siding and not in any way the same as the Nightcaps line that we have been speaking about—there are about 250 private sidings of this class throughout the country—there is another on the same line constructed at the expense of the Kamo Coal Company.

70. *Mr. Ballance.*] What is the length of the line?—About a mile.