

71. Is its terminus near to the main line?—It cannot be more than half or three quarters of a mile off I think.

72. What kind of country is there between?—It is rather rough bush.

73. Is the country between the terminus and the main line settled?—It is all taken up I think.

74. Is it opened up by roads?—I think so; I am not prepared to state positively but I understand that the country is taken up by small settlers.

75. Is there much traffic on the line?—Very little.

76. Are there any other goods carried besides coal?—No.

77. The line was made for the Coal Company?—Yes; it was.

78. You have no idea of the results of the traffic?—There is practically no traffic on the siding except the coal carried.

79. Is the coal traffic increasing?—No, the last information I had showed that it was not increasing.

80. Is there any inexhaustible supply?—I do not know.

81. What is the arrangement between the Government and the Company with respect to working the line?—The Government finds engine power and trucks, runs the trucks up to the mine and takes the coal away; the line is maintained at the Company's expense—we carry no passengers to or from the siding.

82. Do you charge the ordinary freight?—We charge 2s. a ton the same as to the Kamo Coal Company.

83. Is that a special rate?—Yes; on the Whangarei Kamo line. It is somewhat lower than the usual rate.

84. You say there are many sidings like this in the Colony?—Yes; there are a good many private sidings of the same character.

85. Do you think it would be wise if the Government took over this siding?—No; I do not think so; the question of buying out the whole of the private sidings in the Colony would arise if once begun.

86. You think that if the Government purchased this siding it would create a precedent?—I should think it would—I cannot see why, if you bought this you should not buy them all.

87. Then this line differs from the Nightcaps line?—Very materially; the Nightcaps line has been made the Government terminus for all traffic; this siding has no other traffic on it.

88. *Mr. Dargaville.*] You say same sort of siding to the Kamo Mine; what is the length of that?—About 10 or 15 chains, I think.

89. Were you in your present position when the Whangarei-Kamo line was constructed?—No.

90. Is it not within your knowledge that the main object for which that line was constructed was to serve the Kamo Mine?—I believe that was one of the principal motives advanced for making the line—that there was coal there, and that the Kamo Company could work its mine to greater advantage if there was a railway made there.

91. You said there were 250 private sidings throughout the Colony; what would be the average length of them?—They vary very much; the Springfield Company's siding is a mile and a quarter long I think, but many of them are only a chain or two.

92. Are not the Springfield and Kamo sidings exceptionally long?—Yes; that is the case.

93. In fact there few sidings of that description in the Colony?—There are others; the Shag Point, and the Fernhill branch are of the same character.

94. You say that in addition to paying full rates the owners of the Whau Whau mine are required to maintain their line?—Their siding; yes.

95. Is that condition imposed upon other private lines such as the Shag Valley and Nightcaps?—Yes; except the Nightcaps line.

96. Why is the exception made?—They have that advantage, but on the other hand the Government has the advantage of the general traffic on the line?—It is not merely a private siding, but is naturally a public line.

97. Are none of these sidings used by the public, or are they exclusively for the carriage of coal?—This Whau Whau line is a siding simply used for the coal mine only—the Shag Point is another purely coal line, and the Fernhill is of the same character.

98. Is it not a fact that if the necessary facilities were given the public would use this Whau Whau line?—I dare say; but it is quite possible that it would cost a great deal more to give these facilities than you would get out of the public in return for them.

99. In considering the desirability or otherwise of purchasing these lines you do not necessarily consider the advantage that might be afforded to settlement in the immediate neighbourhood?—I do not think the purchase of this line would be any great advantage to the settlers, the line is so short and so close to the main line; and also so close to the township of Whangarei.

100. *Mr. Cowan.*] Is there a large district dependent on this coal mine for supply?—No; most of it is shipped away from Whangarei; the Kamo Company, has the Government contract to supply coal at Auckland.

101. What length of haulage on the Government line have you for this coal?—I think it is about 3 miles.

102. Is there any likelihood of the traffic from the neighbourhood increasing?—I do not see that it can have any effect on the siding.

103. *Dr. Newman.*] Is there any financial advantage to the Colony to be derived from purchasing this line?—I do not think so.

104. Is there any lengthened agreement for this siding with the Government?—Only a yearly agreement; we are not allowed to make any agreement for more than a year.

105. Is it a fact that all new sidings pay £100 for the privilege?—Not in all cases; in the case of sidings outside of stations £100 is now charged, but in small country places sidings are now granted for £25 a year.