

their goods cheaper by rail from Whangarei as a distributing centre than by rail 120 miles from Auckland. Then, again, it is almost decided that ere long Whangarei will be supplied with electric power. That will mean that industries will crop up, and that Whangarei will be in a better position than Auckland to supply the wants of the north. Such lines as grain and flour and potatoes have all to be supplied from the south, and there is no doubt that very shortly there will be a direct boat from the south to Whangarei—it has already been tried and proved successful—and the Whangarei people are looking to the deep-water extension of the railway to Grahamtown to have these heavy goods landed at Whangarei. That means that Whangarei would then be in a position to supply that class of goods to the south for at least thirty or forty miles just as cheaply as they could be sent from Auckland. If the line were completed through to Whangarei it would also be used by tourists as a quick way to the north. It is well known that the Bay of Islands, with its beautiful harbour, is one of the best holiday resorts that can be found. Hitherto the tourists have not been able to get direct communication with it, and are not prepared to undertake the long water-journey to get there. Another thing in that respect is that the tourists would be able to break their journey to the Bay of Islands to visit the places of interest and attraction *en route*. I support the view that the linking-up of Whangarei with the main line is essential for defence purposes. The cable station at Doubtless Bay is absolutely unprotected, and in the event of war the defence of the north would be incalculably benefited by a through line from Auckland and Wellington to the east-coast ports. Another argument that should be of first consideration is the fact that in five years' time the Panama Canal will be nearing completion, and it has been frequently said that there will be considerable traffic, both tourist and otherwise, to the Bay of Islands by that route; in fact, the steamers could land their mails and passengers there and send them direct by rail to Auckland. Another point is that the north is one of the principal fruit-producing parts of the Dominion, and it is only in its infancy. The Department of Agriculture realizes that. A considerable quantity of fruit would be carried by railway to Auckland and further south. The question of the transit of cattle has been sufficiently brought under your notice, but I may say I have the assurance of one of the principal auctioneers in this town that last November one man alone shipped five hundred head of cattle. They were driven to the rail-head, and there entrained and carried on to Te Awamutu in twenty-four hours, which he assures me could not be done in a month by driving or sending by boat to Auckland. I think that only goes to show that it is quite true what other gentlemen have said in that respect. Then, again, the Bay of Islands and Whangarei have the same interests. The Bay of Islands is long settled, and has not advanced as it would have done if it had had better communication with the other centres. In conclusion, I cannot lay too much stress on the point that Whangarei is sure to be the distributing centre because of its splendid port, and it only needs the connection with McCarroll's Gap to make it the distributing centre for the north. The arguments brought forward with regard to defence, I think, go a long way to show that there should be that connection. The same argument does not apply to the west coast of the island because of the fact of the bar harbours.

2. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Are you aware that butter is sent from New Plymouth, Patea, Wanganui, and Foxton by steamer, and that practically the railways carry no butter to Wellington, and that the climatic conditions are practically similar to what you have here?—No, I am not; but I think it is a fact that the butter from the Thames Valley is railed to Auckland instead of by water carriage as could be the case.

3. May that not be because they have not the shipping facilities?—It may be.

4. Are you aware that a large number of steamers trading between New Plymouth and Wellington convey the butter direct not to the freezing-chamber at Wellington, but to the ship's side for shipment to London?—I think as the country develops that will take place at Auckland too, by rail, if it is not already done. I may have made a mistake in using the term "freezer," instead of "to the ship's side," by rail, from Whangarei to Auckland.

5. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Do you advocate the central line?—I do not know the country sufficiently to advocate that route.

6. You assume that there will be a central line?—Yes, in the course of time.

7. Is it not a fact that Whangarei has started on the establishment of freezing-works?—I understand that they are not going on with them. The scheme is almost abandoned.

8. Have not buildings been erected at considerable cost?—I believe they have.

9. Can you give us any idea of the cost?—No.

10. If they are gone on with, the hope of Whangarei is that the direct boats will call at Whangarei?—That may occur in the future, but I do not think myself it will be for a very long time.

11. Do you not think that if tourists came by McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei they would miss the main scenic points of beauty?—No. Although I have not been to the west-coast harbours, I think the Bay of Islands takes a lot of beating.

12. *Mr. Becroft.*] As a business man, have you ever thought of the possibility of the present trade of Whangarei being diverted by direct communication by railway with Auckland?—I do not think there is any possibility of the trade being diverted from Whangarei, because, as I stated before, I consider that Whangarei will in the near future be equal as a distributing centre to what Auckland is at the present time.

13. Whangarei will be a rival to Auckland?—It will certainly be a rival in the distribution of heavy lines, such as flour, grain, potatoes, &c.

14. Have you ever been in the Mangakahia Valley?—As far as the Houto.

15. Have you travelled through the Mangakahia Valley to Kaikohe?—No.

16. Have you seen the country lying between Mangakahia and the Tutamoe?—Only what is to be seen from the Houto, if any.

17. You have not been further north than the Houto in the Mangakahia Valley?—No.