

some of the possibilities that Hokianga has. Hokianga is famous for its fish, having had one haul of no less than five thousand. Our peaches, which are being canned at Hokianga, not only took first prize at the Christchurch Exhibition, but also in London and Paris. No one knows the exact number of cattle taken away from here. Some thousands have gone. The buyers are continuously about the place. A dairy factory was established at Hokianga, and it was scoffed at as being premature; but although only the poorest land has been treated by the dairy, the results have been highly satisfactory. When we see these things, and know of the other good land roundabout, which is unoccupied, it is safe to say that the possibilities of Hokianga are great indeed. The question was asked about the second-class fare to Onehunga, but as a matter of fact the "Claymore" has no second class. We do not want to rob any place of a railway, but we do say that if there are to be any more branch lines taken in hand it will only hinder the construction of this Main Trunk line. In time, no doubt, there will be a branch to Whangarei, but to do it now would be a mistake, for the Main Trunk line has far greater claims for a large expenditure than any branch line would have.

2. *Mr. Becroft.*] In what state is this 400,000 acres on the main line that you have referred to?—Unsettled most of it.

3. Approximately, how much of this land is taken up?—200,000 acres.

4. Would you advise that the Government should resume it before the railway was put through?—It would be beneficial to the country.

5. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Have you any idea of the amount of timber that would go by the railway if constructed by the western route?—They have been taking kauri from the Mangakahia since my boyhood days. 30,000,000 or 40,000,000 ft. ought to cover it to the north, but further north from here there are 100,000,000 ft. of milling-timber—kahikatea and rimu.

6. Would that be taken down by water?—The kauri would, but not the rimu and kahikatea, because if they are any length of time in the water they deteriorate.

7. How was the kauri taken out?—It was driven on the river.

8. *Mr. Evans.*] Do you think the railway could compete with water-carriage between here and Auckland?—Yes; by water there are so many transshipments.

9. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] The settlement along the line would be a very large one, which would not be interfered with by sea-carriage?—That is so.

10. Do you know the country from Kaikohe to Parakao?—Yes. It is the easiest and most natural route, and it is the centre of the island.

11. *Mr. Steadman.*] How often have you been down the eastern route to Whangarei?—A good many times. I was there five years ago, fifteen years ago, and twenty-seven years ago, and a good many times in between.

12. Perhaps ten trips?—It may be twenty.

13. You rode the Main North Road without going off it?—That is so.

14. If freezing-works are established at Whangarei or Bay of Islands, as soon as the line is opened to Kaikohe all the cattle trade will drift that way?—Yes, and that is my object in pointing out the folly of not constructing the central line *via* Pakotai.

15. You think the trade would go to Opuā otherwise?—Yes.

16. Would it not go to Auckland?—It would go to Auckland, but if there are freezing-works at Opuā it would naturally go there.

17. Do you know how far McCarroll's Gap is from Whangarei?—About thirty miles.

18. How many miles are to be constructed to connect that with Auckland by way of Whangarei to Kaikohe?—Twenty-seven or twenty-eight miles: Pakotai to Kaikohe twenty-seven or twenty-eight miles.

19. Would it not give you immediate connection with Auckland if that twenty-seven or twenty-eight miles were made?—Yes, it would.

20. Much sooner than the other way?—No.

21. Why?—The Government is not likely to push a branch line ahead with the same speed as a main line. Another thing, it is robbing the people in the centre of the island who have taken up land on the strength of the main line going through.

KOHUKOHU, WEDNESDAY, 19TH APRIL, 1911.

GEORGE GARDINER MENZIES examined. (No. 18.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am Engineer for the Hokianga County Council, and I was formerly Government engineer under the Roads Department in charge of this district. I reside at Rawene.

2. Would you kindly give your opinion regarding the railway routes in the north of Auckland?—I do not know anything about the exact locality of McCarroll's Gap, but through the Mangakahia Valley for about twenty-two miles I know the country fairly well, but there is a gap from there to Avoca I do not know. From the boundary of the Hokianga County northward I know the country fairly well. The land along the whole of that route is, I suppose, some of the best in the Dominion. I could not say how far it extends on the other side of the line, but from there to Marlborough, on the west, it is of excellent quality. I think the line to Kaikohe should be made through the Mangakahia Valley, and if that was done the whole of the district of Mangakahia would be served, whilst it would also serve as the best connection with Dargaville and the main line.