

36. And in regard to anything to the east of that?—There is a big scope of country to the east which I think would be served by the present Kawakawa Railway.

37. That would not act as a feeder to the Main Trunk line?—No, I am inclined to think that trade would go by the Kawakawa route.

38. *The Chairman.*] With regard to these 600,000,000 ft. of timber: if the line were taken from the Gap straight to Whangarei and the main trunk line not proceeded with, would a stick of that timber go out?—The bulk of this timber would come out over the Trunk line if constructed, but a good deal could be floated out under present conditions.

39. Therefore, in order to tap that timber, it is necessary to construct the railway by the central route?—Undoubtedly.

40. You know the Ngapipito Valley: does not the timber lie some miles south of that valley?—Leaving out a patch of kauri at Ngapipito, which must go to Opuia, all to the south would go by the main line. I think there are scattered patches of timber in the Bay of Islands district that must go by the Kawakawa line—that is, timber in the Motutau.

41. When you made this estimate of 600,000,000 ft. of timber, were you referring to timber that would go by the Main Trunk alone?—Yes, and not timber that would go by the Kawakawa line at all.

42. And in your estimate you are not considering the Motutau timber nor the timber that lies on the west of the Tutamoe Range?—Not at all. It would have to go uphill.

WALTER HOLSTER examined. (No. 45.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—I am a farmer, residing at Houto, and have been for twenty years between Paparoa and Mangakahia. I have been twelve years at Houto.

2. Will you make a statement to the Commission?—I think that others have pretty well said all that I had to say; but there are a few things I would like to refer to. I think the western route opens up more isolated country than the eastern—country that is very badly roaded. I consider the land on the western route is superior to that on the eastern—that is, taking it as a whole. There are lands on the eastern route equal or probably better than some on the west; but there are patches of poor gum country between. In reference to the floods in the Mangakahia, I may say that I have had a lot to do with floods in that country. I was working at the construction of the Mangakahia Bridge at Titoki, and have seen the flood almost over the decking, with the exception of a few feet in the centre, where the camber is. That would be a rise of 71 ft. Where the eastern route crosses the Mangakahia, at the junction of the Wairua and Mangakahia Rivers, it is badly flooded, because of the willows. These have caused the river to flood very much. I saw two weeks ago a skidded road laid on the banks of a tributary of the Mangakahia River washed out for a mile in length. The road was not pegged down, as is the usual custom in flooded country.

3. *Mr. Coom.*] What height of flood would this washout represent?—About 40 ft.

4. How high are the banks at that point?—Something like 50 ft.

5. So that if the railway were laid 50 ft. above the river it would be 10 ft. above that flooded river-level?—Yes. That flood was not a high flood, compared with those we have had. It is the heavy rain that does the damage.

6. What is the maximum flood-level at the point you refer to?—It has gone over the 50-ft.-high bank by probably 10 ft.

7. What span of bridge would it take to cross the Mangakahia River?—I should say, something like 250 ft. to span the actual river.

8. Supposing you had a span of 250 ft., with an approach by trestle-work on the other side?—That could be carried out on the one side, where there is a long flat.

9. *Mr. Evans.*] Do the Maoris hold much country round your district?—Not much.

10. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Is there much timber to come down the Mangakahia yet?—Yes, provided it does not go by railway.

11. Provided the railway reaches Kirikopuni before it gets to Mangakahia, will they continue to float the timber?—Yes.

12. Do you think that if they see a prospect of getting the railway within three or four years they will hold off?—Private owners would, I think.

13. Would you say that the damage that might possibly accrue to the railway is by the rush of water down the hill as much as by the flood itself?—Yes—that is, the side valleys of the Mangakahia.

14. Has anything been done to clear the Mangakahia of the obstructions that are causing the floods?—A little money has been spent, but not much.

15. By the Government or privately?—By the Government, I understand. In one instance Mr. Hunter did it some years ago.

16. Do you know the country about Waikiekie?—Yes.

17. Take the road to Waikiekie that we will travel: where do you say that the good land will lie?—To the west of the road from Maungakaramaea.

18. Taking Waikiekie as the centre, what is the land about there?—Good dairying-country, comparing favourably with anything up here.

19. What is the benefit to be derived by taking the line to the west?—It travels a better class of country for settlement. It also opens up a more isolated country.

20. *Mr. Becroft.*] You started here, I understand, as a Crown tenant?—Yes.

21. What was the value of the land then?—The upset value was 14s. per acre when I took it up.

22. Was it a fair sample of the land in the district?—Yes.

23. What has the value increased to at the present time?—Taking the property right through, I think I have had an offer of something like £6 per acre.