

to the state it is in to-day. Few of the present generation know anything about it. I notice that evidence adduced at Northern Wairoa advocated that the large runs should be acquired by the Government, and cut up, and that the land would then carry a large population. I might say that the old settlers of Maungakaramaea have done all that on their own. They have not depended on the Government for any assistance whatever, and ever since this railway was first mooted, during the time that the Hon. Mr. Mitchelson was Minister of Public Works, when an engineer was sent to lay off the line, which went through Maungakaramaea and skirted round the outside of Whatitiri, we have felt that we would get the benefit of it. Many people remained here on the strength of being able to participate in the benefits of it. The districts interested in the eastern route are Waikiekie, Mareretu, Tauraroa, Ruarangi, Mangapai, Maungakaramaea, Tangihua (1, 2, and 3), Whatitiri, Maungatopere, Manuporoti, Kaitaia, and Ruatangata. The most of these districts have been settled from the early days. I may say that the most of that country is fully settled at the present time, and is not held in large blocks. As regards the agricultural qualifications of Maungakaramaea, Kaitaia, Maungatopere, Whatitiri, Manu, and Poroti, I do not think you could get much better land in any part of New Zealand. I have been experienced in agriculture all my life, and I know that any of those districts with fair treatment will give a good return. I am not so much interested in the live-stock question, and am more inclined to take up the question of the dead-stock. Those districts being well adapted for agriculture, I consider that they would compare favourably with the district of Pukekohe. You all know the amount of trade that is conveyed from the Pukekohe Station, and if those districts I have mentioned had the same facilities I see no reason whatever why they would not give just as good a return, and cause as much traffic. I might say that most of those districts have got to the end of their first development. The second development is going to take a great deal more consideration than the first, because on the first development we have simply to provide ourselves with an axe and billhook, whereas now we require to have a plough and every known implement. When we get into an agricultural district it does not mean traffic only one way. It means traffic both ways, because ground on which crops are grown requires to be fed, and there is no doubt that there would be a great inward traffic in manure and lime. I am one of the directors of the Whangarei Dairy Factory, which was started four years ago. In our first year we made 106 tons, and this year we made 212 tons, which shows that we have exactly doubled our output in four years. I have no doubt that the Maungatopere and Hikurangi Factories are increasing at the same rate. Butter is better handled by train than by ship, and if there was a branch line going to Whangarei, by the time it got there, if our increase went on at the same ratio as in the last four years, we should have something like 1,200 to 1,400 tons during the season. The freight on that butter costs us £1 per ton to Auckland. There are also the charges for cartage, railage to Onehunga, and shipping to Wellington. I see no reason why that butter should not be trained right through from Whangarei to Wellington. I have no idea what the charges might be, but I should say that they would be less than we are charged at the present time. The disabilities we are under in delivering our cream to Whangarei are considerable. In some cases we have to cart it twenty miles, at a cost of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound on every pound of butter-fat delivered in Whangarei. I think the western side has a great advantage over us. They can collect cream on the river from seventy to eighty miles without having any mud to contend with.

3. *Mr. Evans.*] Would you have the connection with Whangarei made before or after the completion of the Main Trunk?—I would connect as soon as possible, if it is wanted to be made a paying proposition.

4. What exports would you send away by the railway?—Anything in the agricultural line.

5. This place has been settled for fifty years, and what is the export per month?—I could not say. When I came here there were two cows and a few sheep, and they are to be counted by the thousands now. We have two monthly sales held in the district, and the stock are mostly bought by speculators.

6. You do not export any produce at all?—I send away about 10 or 12 tons of early potatoes.

7. Are you as large a farmer as there is about here?—Yes.

8. Do you export 10 or 12 tons of potatoes every year?—Yes, about that.

9. You do not grow anything but potatoes and stock?—Butter and wool in addition. I sent away five bales of wool this year.

10. *Mr. Ronayne.*] You say that in the event of the railway being completed to Auckland butter would be sent right through by railway to Wellington: are you aware of the fact that the butter produced in the Taranaki district is not sent by railway to Wellington, but is shipped at New Plymouth, Patea, Wanganui, and Foxton for Wellington?—No.

11. You are a much longer distance from Wellington than any of those places I have mentioned, and it is scarcely likely that you would be able to make better freight arrangements than the Taranaki farmers, and the result would be that you would send by sea or to Auckland?—It was a thought of my own that it could be done more economically that way.

12. What do you mean by dead-stock?—Agricultural produce.

13. *Mr. Coom.*] Is there more good land on the western side comparatively than on the eastern side of the Tangihua—say, five or six miles on either side of the range?—I should say there was more good land on the east.

14. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] You mentioned Mareretu: is that not McCarroll's Gap?—I believe McCarroll's Gap is in Mareretu.

15. That will be benefited by whatever route is taken?—That is so.

16. Did I understand that you advocate that the central route should go on to Maungakaramaea, and before it goes any further a branch should be made to Whangarei?—Yes.

17. Have you no consideration for those north of this?—Yes, I have, but I have consideration for ourselves too. I would like to see it a paying proposition.