

9. To what extent on both sides of the line?—It is a narrow valley. All the land on the eastern side of the Tangihua Ranges is, practically speaking, of no value at all. Of course, on the eastern side of the eastern route there is some very good land—that is, at Whatitiri and Weki Valley.

10. *Mr. Steadman.*] It is agricultural land?—It is first-class dairying land at present. In years to come it may be agricultural land.

11. *The Chairman.*] How many miles?—About nine miles. Round Maungakarama there is only just a mile or a mile and a half. Outside of that is poor barren country. But when you start to go down the Waiotama Valley and Weki Valley right to Whangarei through Maunu, Maungatapere, and Poroti, there is a strip of good first-class country extending about nine miles on the railway and three miles back on the south, five miles north to Poroti, and twenty miles in the centre right through to Whangarei.

12. Going on then?—From Poroti to the Wairua River the land is practically valueless, with the exception of a little on the bank of the river. From Wairua to the Mangakahia River, about three miles, is also poor land, with the exception of about 1,000 acres around the river, which is good land. From the Mangakahia River northwards for about four miles there is some very good land. Part of it is a kahikatea flat and floods pretty badly, and is covered with blackberry, but it is very good soil. It is European land, and is principally owned by the Frasers. Northwards from the four miles there is a strip of very poor country to Parakao, about four or five miles. Of course, near the river the land is better.

13. Do I understand that with the exception of around Maungakarama there is no agricultural land on the eastern route?—There are some flats that could be called agricultural land near the Mangakahia River, but there is no extent of it. There are perhaps 1,000 acres around the river that in time may be used for agricultural purposes.

14. *Mr. Evans.*] How many acres of Crown lands are open for occupation on the western side and on the eastern side?—I do not think there is any on the eastern side. There may be small sections here and there, but the bulk of the land is all taken up. There is none on the western side either until you get past Houto.

15. You say there is very little land at all available for occupation on the eastern side?—Not until you get to Parakao, and then there is a large block of Native land.

16. You say a lot of the land on the eastern side is poor land, but it is held by small settlers: how do they make a living on it?—They make a living off it, but they do not make a living on it.

17. How do they manage that?—They go and get employment away. There are a lot of absentees' sections there. They have never attempted to cultivate them. It is impossible at present under any known methods to profitably utilize that land.

18. It will not even grow grass?—No, it will not even grow ti-tree.

19. What sort of land is it?—Poor pipeclay.

20. What you call gum land?—There is gum on part of it, but some of it is too poor for gum. I dare say it had kauri on it years ago, but successive burnings have burnt the whole of the humus and soil out of it.

21. How many acres of that country are there on the eastern side?—There is a lot of absentee land between Mangapai and Ruarangi and farther on to Waikiekie.

22. You say there are patches of good land and patches of bad land all through it: is there more bad land than good?—Oh, no. From Maungakarama to Waikiekie is all good land. There are about 8,000 acres of poor land from McCarroll's Gap to Parakao, on the eastern side.

23. Is there more land on the eastern side than there is on the western side to be benefited by the railway?—There is no poor land on the western side at all—it is all good land on the western side. I think there is more land to be benefited on the western side.

24. Do you know who owns these large blocks of land on the western side?—Riddell owns 12,000 acres, and I think George Bailey owns between 5,000 and 6,000 acres.

25. Are these people clearing this land and using it?—Yes, half of it is cleared and in grass.

26. What amount per acre would have to be spent to bring the bush land on the western side into grass and fence it?—About £2 10s. to £3 per acre.

27. What would it take to stump the land and make it ready for cropping?—That is not at all practicable. It would take from £10 to £20 per acre. If you waited for fifteen or twenty years for the stumps to rot you could do it much cheaper than that. But it is not agricultural land even then.

28. *Mr. Coom.*] You say that on the west side it is all very good pastoral country: how far from the proposed route do you reckon that extends?—Starting from McCarroll's Gap it extends right to the Wairoa River.

29. Is there not agricultural land at Tokatoka?—Oh, yes.

30. How far from the line, then, does the good pastoral country extend?—Practically the whole way, with the exception of a bit of poor land, which is nothing to speak of, in the centre. The Tokatoka flat is agricultural land.

31. You spoke of some good land on the east before you reach Poroti extending to Whangarei: how far from the line would that be?—Twelve miles right in to Whangarei.

32. Would the bulk of that country be served by the proposed eastern route or by Whangarei?—I should say half would go either way.

33. We have it from the Valuer-General that the capital value of the land for two miles distance on each side of these two routes is practically the same?—Yes.

34. And we find that the population is practically the same?—Yes.

35. Taking that into consideration, and taking a comprehensive view of the two lines, on which side do you consider the land is better?—I consider the western side is better, inasmuch