

13. Is there much timber left on the eastern line?—Very little, or on the western line either—that is, what would be considered to be marketable timber. There is a good deal of kahikatea timber on both routes, but that is only used for boxmaking.

14. You have not any idea of the value of the land?—Land has been sold on the Wairoa, I have heard, at £20 per acre. I sold land there at £5 an acre, and they are now asking £15 for it.

15. You have also sold land at 5s. 6d. per acre?—Yes.

16. What is it worth now?—That I could not say. One block of land was bought by H. G. Smith from the Kauri Timber Company for 7s. 6d., and he sold it for £20. Then, again, Omanu, Tauroa, and Tauraroa were sold by the company for a very small sum, and the land was sold again at as high as £15 and £16 an acre.

17. Is there much land fit for settlement?—There would be if the Government took the land from the Natives as they do from the Europeans.

18. Do you recommend that?—Certainly. If they take the European land they should take the Native land.

19. *Mr Ronayne.*] With reference to the pipeclay gum lands, a previous witness stated that it was utterly hopeless to try and do anything with them: what is your opinion regarding the pipeclay country?—The actual pipeclay lands are not very extensive, and there are gum lands and gum lands. The white pipeclay gum land is not worth much, but the ordinary gum land, with proper tilling and draining, is very good.

20. The pipeclay land is comparatively worthless?—Yes, but the extent is not very great. If the Commission would care about going and seeing the experiments I have made on 1,000 acres they would see magnificent pastoral land on one side of the road and on the other side of the road the land is quite barren. An easy journey from Auckland would be to the ranges between Henderson and Kumeo. This is considered to be the poorest gum country, and one settler broke some of it up and has secured a magnificent farm.

21. You stated that if the line was constructed down the western route it would simply be a passenger-line north of the Wairoa. Would not there be a large quantity of stock to be carried?—Yes, fat stock; but the butter, wool, and frozen meat would all go by sea.

22. That is, in the event of frozen-meat works being established in the future?—Yes, and not in the very far future either. It is contemplated now, but the promoters are uncertain whether to go to Whangarei or to Wairoa.

23. You are aware that works have been built at Whangarei?—Yes, but there is a large company formed here, and they are uncertain where they will establish their works.

24. A previous witness stated that there were 600,000,000 ft. of timber on the western line as far north as Hokianga which would all have to go over the railway: "Could not a large proportion of that timber be floated down the river," he was asked, and he replied "No." Is that correct?—It is absolutely incorrect. I did not want to say anything about that. To my mind, it is very indifferent timber. Teraire is not a very good timber. There is a far better timber throughout the route than that. That is the manawa, or the silver-pine, which is a superior timber to that obtained in the South Island. Instead of it being white, almost like kahikatea, it has more the colour of matai. It is timber that cannot possibly be floated. There is not sufficient of it to warrant an industry being established. Teraire is on an equal footing with tawa, which has been used in Wellington for making furniture in imitation of American oak.

25. Is teraire a useful timber for weatherboarding?—No. I have known kahikatea to be used for weatherboarding. Sometimes it stands, and sometimes it does not. Even when painted it gets the worm into it.

26. How about the boats that go from Auckland round the North Cape to the Wairoa ports: are there many boats in the trade?—One steamer goes every month. The vessels come from Newcastle with coal and take freights round to the timber ports, where they load an outward cargo of timber.

27. The steamer only carries cargo to Dargaville, and the goods will have to be transhipped to the various ports on the Wairoa?—Yes. Nearly every vessel that trades to Wairoa takes goods.

28. These goods are carried at practically ballast rates?—Yes; and I may say that the rate of 15s. on the Helensville line was reduced when I was Minister of Railways to counteract the sea-carrying rates. It is not a payable carrying-rate.

29. *Mr. Coom.*] You object to the western route because it crosses strong tidal rivers?—That is one objection.

30. In what way is that an objection?—That is only my own opinion, and my opinion is that if you are establishing a trunk railway it should in every way possible refrain from entering into competition with water.

31. You speak of it as inducing competition with water?—That is so.

32. You do not see any engineering difficulty in crossing a tidal river?—None whatever.

33. You do not think the western route opens up the extent of country the eastern route does?—That is so. It shuts out too much country. Take Kirikopuni to the point where the eastern and the western routes junction; it is not more than fourteen miles away, which is not very great.

34. Do not your arguments apply equally to the eastern route?—No, because it is only fourteen miles from Kirikopuni to where the lines junction in Mangakahia.

35. Take the country south of the Wairoa?—On the Wairoa itself?

36. To Mangakahia, on the western side of the Tangihuas?—The distance is not very great to the western Wairoa, and could at a future time be brought in by a branch railway.

37. Can you tell why the country is so backward when they have this fine waterway?—As a matter of fact, that land was purchased or given by the Natives to Messrs. Walton Bros. fifty or sixty years ago. It was held by them till within the last twelve years, when the Kauri Timber