

116. And you base that opinion upon the land that would be opened up by the railway?—Yes. I would like to say this: that if the land is going to be kept unoccupied as it is at the present time the railway could not possibly pay. The first step should be to acquire the Native land by hook or by crook.

117. Are you familiar with the provisions of last year's Native-land legislation?—I have not seen it. I say emphatically that the first thing to be done is to acquire that Native land prior to the railway going through the country at all. The railway should not go beyond Mangakahia until that land is acquired.

118. *Mr. Becroft.*] And would you say these large private holdings, too?—Certainly. I think the land should be divided up amongst the people. I do not believe in any person holding too much land.

119. *The Chairman.*] Do you know that the bulk of the Native land affected by this line is included in Moutatau Block, and do you know that 40,000 acres of that block is being administered by the Native Land Board?—I had not heard that, but I am very pleased if it is so.

120. Do you not know that the Karae Block, in the Hokianga district, is being administered by the Native Land Board?—I am very pleased to hear it is so.

121. You say the Native area is about half a million acres: do you know what Maori population is carried upon that half-million acres?—I have not the slightest idea.

122. Do you know the Maoris in that area number between eight and ten thousand?—I suppose if you take the area from the Mangakahia River to the North Cape there would be more than eight thousand Natives. There is a lot of land in the Whangape and Herekino districts held by Natives still.

123. Do you know that the lands about Kaikohe are at present being acquired by Europeans under the provisions of the recent Native-land legislation?—I have not heard that.

124. Seeing there is a population of Maoris there at the present time, and seeing the facilities that are given for opening up Native lands, and also seeing that the Government can acquire Native lands, would you still say there should be no construction of the Main Trunk line until these lands in the far north are acquired?—No. I was not aware of the fact that power had been given. But though legislation may give power to effect certain things they may not be carried out. That has happened over and over again.

125. You say that the Main Trunk line *via* the eastern route would be a payable proposition to the Dominion: would you say or would you deny that the Main Trunk line *via* the western route would be a payable proposition to the Dominion?—They both would pay when settled, but not now. The settlement must follow the line. But I say the line to be adopted should be the line giving the best benefit to the country as a whole. I say either would be a payable proposition to the country.

126. How much timber is there left in the Wairoa—ten or twenty or thirty years' supplies?—What class of timber are you speaking of?

127. Marketable timber?—Ten years' supply at the outside. I should say that for kauri there is not more than three or four years' life.

128. What other timbers will then be payable as from the Wairoa?—Rimu, totara, matai, and white-pine.

129. And ten to twelve years' time will finish up the timber on the Wairoa River?—Pretty well.

130. Where will the rimu go?—To the south principally. Sydney and Melbourne are both becoming good markets for rimu timber.

131. Where will the totara go?—South. The Auckland market is supplied with totara from Taupo.

132. The matai?—That is a timber that is coming into general use. It is a first-class timber for flooring purposes.

133. What is the freight on these river steamers per ton between Dargaville and Helensville?—I think, about 10s., on an average.

134. Do you know what freight they are paying to-day at Kirikopuni?—I cannot tell you.

135. Do you know that Baldwin swore he was paying £1 10s. to £2 a ton at Kirikopuni for general freight?—I should say that was a very great exaggeration. I can get you the exact price. It all depends on the class of goods. That might be the freight on case goods, but not on ordinary goods.

135A. You admit there is no chance of any reduction being made by the river steamers?—Certainly not, unless they want to lose money. The rates are as low as they can be.

136. Your impression is that the freight will be about 10s. per ton on an average, to Dargaville: would it not be more to other places?—Yes, higher up from Dargaville I think it is 3s. or 4s. a ton more.

137. In ten years' time, supposing this railway does not go to the west, then the people on the river will be dependent upon freight *via* Helensville and the steamer?—And the coast outside.

138. What will keep the boats going outside after the timber is done?—There will be nothing.

139. So after the timber is done the people in the Wairoa will be dependent on the steamer to and rail from Helensville?—Certainly. The reason of the low freights now from the south and Australia is because they have timber back.

140. The freight, you say, by rail is 15s. to Helensville and 10s. by steamer?—I think so. I am not speaking by the book.

141. So you estimate that in ten years' time the freight will be £1 5s. a ton to Dargaville?—Yes.

142. Do you know Mangapai, on the east coast?—Yes.

143. Do you know what the freight is there?—I have no idea.