

and Whangarei. Is it your opinion that no expenditure should be made on that connection in the meantime?—Not until the Main Trunk Railway reaches Mangakahia.

26. Do you think that the connection between Whangarei and McCarroll's Gap should also stand down?—Yes, until the line reaches Mangakahia.

27. You have drawn a point of difference between the eastern and western routes. As far as I understand, this difference is very small. I suppose you understand that too?—Yes. I said about a mile and a half.

28. Does not that affect the country north of the northern junction of the different routes, and any country between McCarroll's Gap and Mangakahia?—It does, in this way: The question we are considering to-day affects every person between here and Auckland, and if this line is carried by the best route where it will join the Main Trunk line, we will then have a better service, we will have more frequent trains, and therefore whatever the difference is in favour of the route it must affect the whole of the line right through. If we can save one mile between Tangiteroria and Mangakahia it is all in favour of the service paying.

29. You are of opinion that the shorter route materially affects the question?—Yes.

30. What knowledge have you that the western route will be shorter than the eastern one?—The figures issued by the Public Works Department.

31. They are simply trial-survey lines, and the route, when located, may be shorter on the other side?—I understand them to be official surveys, from which it is shown that the western line is shorter by a mile and a half.

32. Are you aware that there is a proposal to divide the eastern line at the northern end?—I have seen the route along which it is proposed to make that line, and I do not think it would shorten it.

33. At what points on either of the routes do you think the distance could be reduced?—From Pakotai, and at the point of junction from here to the Wairoa River. I am distinctly of opinion that if a thoroughly careful survey were made, and a trial line run, a material saving could be effected. I believe that immediately south of the Wairoa there is one point where, unless some reason can be shown, it is patent to a layman that a very considerable saving could be effected.

34. Can you make any suggestion as to the shortening of the eastern route?—No; I am not in a position to show that any material saving could be made.

35. Can you indicate any point along either of those routes where metal can be obtained?—There is metal at several points through the Omano Block, at Mangakahia, and on the Tangihua Range. Metal is also obtainable on the eastern route at Maungakamea. Between the river at Kirikopuni and Mangakahia very good limestone is to be found. On the Maungakamea there is volcanic rock.

36. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] You might explain the reason why you mention metal as a very important item on the western route?—Because the railway would earn revenue by the conveyance of metal for the making of roads, and also from the fact that the making of roads to the railway would induce traffic by the railway in preference to going by sea. Then if the railway can supply metal at the stations, and by that means afford facilities for metalling the roads and giving access to the land, it must have a material effect on the traffic going over the railway, as against going by sea.

37. Can you give us an idea as to the cost of metalling roads in the unmetalled portions of Hobson County, and in those where metal is handy?—I prefer that you should put that question to the engineer, because he has the statistics at his fingers' ends. It has cost us up to £1 a yard.

38. Would it cost less than that if the railway were made?—I understand it has averaged us, to the fairly accessible points, about 10s. a yard; but then you have always to remember that we are for the most part metalling accessible roads. There are roads like the Mangonui Valley, in regard to which it is a problem where we can get metal to the roads at anything like a feasible sum at all.

39. Do the remarks as to the absence of metal apply to the eastern route as well as to the western?—Metal is very easily found outside our country, because there are more available good connecting-roads from Maungakamea, and it necessarily follows that metal can be taken over the wider scope of roads on the east coast more cheaply than on the west. We have no practicable means of getting metal into the Mangonui Valley from any quarry.

40. In regard to railway-construction in the north, what point has been spoken of most frequently as the objective?—Kaikohe, Hokianga, and Mangakahia.

41. If any proposal were made to pass by Mangakahia, what would you say to it?—I believe it has been openly urged in regard to taking the line to Mangakahia that it would not be long before the Trunk line would pass within a short distance of that valley. Surveys have been made of that spot, and I know for a fact that the settlers balloted for sections there on the understanding that there was a prospect of railway connection being given to them.

42. Have the conditions in regard to advertisements of the Mangakahia land ever mentioned the railway at all?—I have not seen them. I am not a land speculator.

43. Have you any knowledge of the freezing-works about to be established at Whangarei, or as to why the promoters have not gone on with them?—Yes, I have some knowledge of that matter, and I think the probable reason that they have not been started before is because a large number of settlers felt that the works were not sufficiently easy of access. There was a very considerable uncertainty as to the prospect of a proper connection by sea. I might also say that a similar fact, and the question of the connection by sea, has been the cause of a failure to establish freezing-works in the Kaipara.

44. In the future, if the north is developed and better roading given, do you think Opua will become a centre for freezing-works?—It is very difficult to forecast the future, but I see no reason why there should not be freezing-works there if there are sufficient means of conveying stock to the works.