

18. It is twenty-seven miles between Whangarei and the central route. If twenty-seven miles were added to the Main Trunk line from McCarroll's Gap it would bring the line two miles on this side of Kirikopuni?—What is wrong with having two lines? There is no doubt that a line farther would pay.

19. Do you not know that no moneys earned by railways are ever spent in making railways?—I was not aware of it. I believe that the railways in the north pay.

20. How near would you be to the railway if that railway were made to two miles beyond Kirikopuni, given that you had a good road?—About sixteen miles.

21. If the railway were made twenty-seven miles along the western route, it would bring you within sixteen miles of the rail-head: would that not suit you better than a connection with Whangarei?—I do not know. As I said before, I am in favour of both lines being pushed on as soon as possible.

22. If the line were made to Whangarei you would still be thirty-four miles from the railway?—Yes.

23. Whereas if the same distance were made along the western route you would be within sixteen miles of the railway?—Even if we were within sixteen miles of the railway, it would be no benefit to me, because of the roads. Even when the railway is up here, as far as goods are concerned, I do not know that the railway will be much advantage. I think the water carriage to Whangarei and by road out here for heavy goods would be of more advantage than the railway. I paid £5 10s. per ton last winter for cartage.

24. What is the cartage rate during the summer months?—£3 10s. a ton when the load is only one way, and £3 a ton when there is a load each way.

25. Do you not think that you would get a cheaper rate to the rail-head at Kirikopuni?—I could not state whether it would be cheaper or not. With a good road the trip could be done in a few hours, but with bad roads it is quite different. I could not get it done now for £6 a ton.

26. Will you compare the state of the roads now with what it was five years ago?—They are very much better all over the north, particularly during the last eighteen months.

27. Is it not a fact that two years ago you had no road to Kirikopuni?—Not a vehicle road, from Holster's.

28. In another four years—by the time the railway gets to Kirikopuni—you would have a good road?—Probably, but that would be of no use to get to Kirikopuni. It would not be the shortest route.

29. Do you imagine the Government would push on both lines as fast as they would one line?—I imagine they could do it, but I do not suppose they would. It is a question of money.

30. *Mr. Ronayne.*] If it took four years to build the railway from McCarroll's Gap to Nukutawhiti, and two years to build the line from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei, which do you consider would be the better course to follow—to build the line to this point, or to build the line between the Gap and Whangarei?—For myself, I suppose I would sooner that it came up here, but I do not believe it would be so much for the good of the population. I think the railway should go where the bulk of the population is.

31. *The Chairman.*] You know that £100,000 per annum is being voted for the Main Trunk line. The average cost of construction is about £6,000 a mile, and the expenditure of £100,000 is equivalent to seventeen miles per annum: that would mean that in about four or five years' time the railway would be here, and in six years it would be through to Kaikohe: if both routes were to be sent on together—and I conclude that that would also mean the connection from Kirikopuni to the Dargaville-Kaihu line—you would not admit that, if you had the connection with Whangarei, I suppose?—If it would pay, I would admit that. Dargaville is as entitled to a connection as Whangarei.

32. Do you think, as a business proposition, that if the line is sent in from the Gap to Whangarei, the Main Trunk line will be made through Mangakahia in the near future?—Not so far as the population is concerned. The only chance would be by reason of the fact that the Government owns so much land there.

33. *Mr. Coom.*] Do you think the country between here and McCarroll's Gap would support a large population?—Round about here it would, particularly from Pakatoa upwards, and on the flats there.

34. What is the nature of the land between here and Kaikohe?—It is good land.

35. You know that Whangarei is connected with Auckland by sea, and you think it is more important to give Whangarei another connection by land rather than open up this country?—Because they have been endowed by nature is no reason why they should be denied a railway connection.

36. You think that a small population like that of Whangarei would support a railway in addition to the sea traffic?—You have the extra revenue to be got from the country in between.

37. Do you think the railway would increase the price of the land? Would it put £1 an acre on it?—I do not know that it would.

PARAKAO, WEDNESDAY, 26TH APRIL, 1911.

ANDREW HUGH MURRAY examined. (No. 41.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—I am a farmer, residing at Opouteke, and have been there eight years.

2. What do you wish to say?—I favour the western route.

3. What class of land does that route go through?—Mostly good grazing-country.

4. What is the nature of the land in the Opouteke Valley?—Very rich. I have grown grapes in the open, also strawberries and most kinds of vegetables. The land will grow good apples.

5. How far back does the Opouteke Valley run from Mangakahia Valley?—Nearly twenty miles of country with branch valleys, all good land, and running north and west.