

ALEXANDER POLLOCK examined. (No. 42.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—Parakao. I am a farmer.
2. Do you wish to make a statement about the railway-route question?—I am well acquainted with the country between Kaikohe and Auckland, with the exception of one portion near McCarroll's Gap. I favour the western route, because it is more central and would open up better country. On the eastern side a great deal of the land is very poor. After you leave Maungakaramaea, miles of it would not feed a rabbit.
3. *Mr. Evans.*] Is there not some poor gum land on the route you advocate?—Only a few acres.
4. *Mr. Ronayne.*] Is there not some good land on the eastern route?—Not much after leaving Maungakaramaea. I understood the eastern route was the one to Whangarei.
5. It has nothing to do with it. Are you aware of any good land between McCarroll's Gap and the junction of the two routes?—It is good land all through there.
6. Is there double the amount of good land on the western route?—I think there is.
7. Are you in favour of the shorter route between McCarroll's Gap and Kaikohe?—I am in favour of the route on the western side of the Tangihua Range.
8. What would be sent from this part of the country if the railway were completed by the route you suggest?—Produce of all kinds and timber. One bush has 30,000,000 ft. of kauri in it and 100,000,000 ft. of timber of all kinds. The line runs through it.
9. What port would that timber go to by railway?—Auckland.
10. Would it not go to Kirikopuni?—It should go there, but it is a good way inland, and a railway-line would have to be put in to Kirikopuni.
11. Would the railway get the timber that is now driven down the creeks?—It could be taken out by railway then.
12. Would it not be cheaper to drive the timber down the creeks than to carry it by rail?—In certain places it would.
13. *Mr. Coom.*] Do you consider when the timber is cut off this land the country ceases to be of any further value?—It is good for other purposes. Other produce will render the line payable.
14. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] If the timber could be as easily taken out by water as by railway, would it not have been taken out long ago?—It is Crown timber, and it has not been offered for sale.
15. Why not?—Part of this bush has been worked out on the other watershed of Kirikopuni.
16. Is there not a tram-line in there?—The Mitchelson Timber Company started to put in a tram-line, but abandoned it.
17. Why?—It was a bluff to make the people believe they had the timber when they never had it. They tried to get the license taken off the creek to prevent other people floating timber out, but they did not get a stick of timber.
18. Do you know the country south of the Tangihua Range?—Yes.
19. Standing at the southern end of that range, which side would be the best country?—It is good land, both east and west at that point.
20. Do you know the Waipu district and the Waipu Range?—No.
21. *Mr. Becroft.*] Is there not a great loss of timber by the present way of floating it to the mills by water?—Yes, millions of feet of timber have been sunk in the river. Some timber will not float, but kauri will.
22. Would not all timber be sent by the owners by rail rather than run that risk?—Yes.
23. *Mr. Steadman.*] You spoke in an airy way of 30,000,000 ft. of kauri being in this valley, where is the place?—Not three miles from here—between here and Holster's; the proposed railway-line goes through it.
24. You know the kauri workings?—Yes.
25. How many old workings are there in this district which have been taken up for agriculture?—Mostly all of them.
26. How long is it since they were cleared of kauri?—About four or five years.
27. You say the Mitchelson Timber Company did not buy that timber?—No.
28. What authority have you for saying that?—It has never been advertised or offered for sale.
29. Will you swear that they have not bought that timber and put in this line, and that the whole business has been stopped because the company has gone into liquidation?—I cannot swear that they have never bought the timber.
30. Why do you say that it is only a bluff?—I have been told so.
31. Who by?—I was told by the bush contractors when they were about finishing the other job up here that they were likely to get this contract, which was going to be offered. They said the Mitchelson Company was almost sure to get the bush.
32. You say they have not bought it: what is your authority?—That is what I have heard.
33. Please tell me your authority?—It was Browns who told me, some of the contractors.
34. Before you came into this room, did you know the difference between the two routes?—Yes.
35. Did you know the difference between the one line going direct to Mangakahia and the other from McCarroll's Gap to Whangarei?—I understood that was what the dispute was about.
36. You did not know anything about this difference between the two lines?—Not until to-night.
37. On what did you form your opinion, then, after coming into this room to-night?—I was always in favour of the central route, because it was more central.
38. How much more does it lie towards the centre of the Island than the eastern one?—A good deal, but I do not know how much.