

ALFRED HILL examined. (No. 43.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I reside in the Mangakahia Valley. I am a farmer, and have been five years here.

2. Would you like to make a statement to the Commission regarding the matter we are inquiring into?—I know the country fairly well up this valley, and from Maungakaramaea down to Kirikopuni. I am in favour of the Main Trunk line being pushed on by the western route, on the Tangihuas. I know the country from Kaikohe down to the Tangihua Range.

3. What are your reasons in favour of the western route?—It is a little shorter, and the country is a little better there.

4. Between Kirikopuni and here, what is the class of country?—Very good grazing-country, and in several places capable of growing any kind of agricultural produce.

5. What class of country is it on the eastern route?—Some is very good, as good as any on the western route; but I think the latter is the best.

6. How many acres have you?—500 acres. I run sheep and cattle, and the land carries two sheep and a half to the acre.

7. What is your opinion about making a branch line to Whangarei?—I do not think it would pay, because the last eight or ten miles before getting to Whangarei is rather poor country. A lot of the country it would go through before reaching Whangarei lies handy to the Mangapai wharf, which would interfere with the prospects of the line.

8. *Mr. Evans.*] What did your land cost you?—£1 2s. per acre, from the Crown. It was bush land.

9. What do you value it at when cleared?—£5 per acre.

10. *Mr. Coom.*] In addition to the two sheep and a half to the acre, can you carry any cattle?—I would not like to say.

11. Is it not usual to carry a certain number of cattle with the sheep in order to keep the country clear?—Some farmers do.

12. How many cattle per 100 acres, running them with sheep, would you require for that purpose?—I might carry fifty cattle on my place when it is cleared in addition to the sheep.

13. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What effect would a railway passing your door have upon your land?—It would double my profit on my produce.

14. If you had a railway handy, would you still run sheep or cattle?—Yes, and do a little agriculture.

15. Would you grow maize?—Yes.

16. Have you had any experience in growing maize?—Yes, down near the Tangihuas.

17. What do you think of the proposal to serve this district by an electric line running into Whangarei? Would you like to wait for that time instead of for the railway connection?—No.

18. How long do you think it would be before that electric line was instituted?—A good while.

19. Then you do not think it is a fair proposition to have a main line of railway running through Whangarei, and connect this district with it by an electric line?—No.

20. Do you think a central line through this district, giving a connection with Auckland, would pay the Dominion better than running a line from Whangarei?—I think so.

21. *Mr. Becroft.*] What do you think your land would be worth after the railway went through?—Double what it is worth when cleared. I estimate its value cleared at £5 per acre.

22. Would not that mean doubling the rates to be obtained for the maintenance of the roads?—Yes.

23. Therefore, the railway would be an incentive for the making of good roads as well as quick communication with Auckland?—Yes.

24. Have you had any experience in farming in other districts?—Not south of the Tangihuas.

25. *Mr. Steadman.*] Do you know the configuration of the country to the east and west of this main road?—Only a very little south of Maungakaramaea.

26. Do you know where the bulk of the population lies?—I could not say.

27. How are the people who live at Otongo and all those places on the east coast going to get to Auckland by the Main Trunk?—I do not know that part of the country.

28. Do you not think they have a claim on the central route?—I do not think they would be better served if it went east or west.

29. Do you not know that people like to take the railway-line in preference to a sea-voyage?—Yes, but I do not think one line would have any great advantage over the other as regards the distance to travel.

30. Do you know how far the people living round the part I speak of would have to go to get a connection with the western route?—I do not.

31. I think you favoured the western route as being the shortest?—Yes.

32. If the eastern route turned out the shortest, would you favour that?—I think the western is shorter. I also consider the better land is on the west.

33. On which side is the largest unimproved value in regard to land?—On the western, I think.

34. Have you no facts to back your assertion up?—I do not know the country very well south of the Tangihuas.

35. Apparently you have no facts to support your statements in regard to the northern land?—No; but in my opinion the western route goes through richer flats than the eastern one.

36. Do not the routes go through some of the Mangakahia flats?—Just here they do.

37. Do they not follow the course of the river?—Yes, until you get very near to Tangiteroria.

38. Where is the best country about the Tangihuas?—There is some good country there.

39. Is not the land on the other side of the same class?—Pretty nearly.