

93. It does not appear, on the face of it, that the township would benefit by the extension?—It would amount to this: that wherever the station was located the township would eventually be removed to it. If the line was, as recommended by a committee of the Ashburton County Council, brought across the river on the present traffic bridge, it would come close up to the township.

94. Did the Ashburton County Council recommend that?—Yes.

95. To whom was the recommendation made?—To the Government.

96. Would the present traffic bridge carry the railway?—It was estimated by a competent authority that an expenditure of £700 to £800 would be necessary to strengthen the bridge. The engineer who drew the plans for the bridge stated that he had in view that probably at some period or other it would be used for that purpose. I may state that the Rakaia and Ashburton Forks Railway Company have surveyed a line from Methven which ends near the present township.

97. Do you know what the original intention was?—It was to follow the line I have indicated.

98. Is it not intended to extend the Methven line further?—No; I suppose from want of means.

99. Would that extension of the Methven line be as beneficial to the district as the one you propose?—Yes; except for the business ties and connection with Ashburton which we have at present. I think if the Tinwald line were extended to the Forest it would be more beneficial than the Methven line.

100. What is the principal direction of the passenger traffic?—Back and forwards to Ashburton; principally on business with Ashburton. I may state that, as one of many, I consider a great injustice would be done to the district if the line were not extended to this township either from Methven or Ashburton. Many years ago there was a reserve: it was proposed to run up three or four miles northward of the present line.

101. Would it have been a better line than the present one?—It would have opened up the district much better; but when the Rakaia and Ashburton Forks Railway was started it was thought that the line I speak of would interfere with the traffic on the Methven line.

102. Then, the line was moved three or four miles to the south in order not to compete with the Methven line?—Yes, and also because there were no rivers to cross; and when the Canterbury Interior line was proposed, that was given as a reason why it should come up and intersect with that, and have one bridge to serve both, instead of having a bridge where Mr. Triphook surveyed it. There would be a bridge somewhere as shown by the green line on the map.

103. Therefore they did not cross where Mr. Triphook proposed, but carried it farther up in order to suit the proposed Canterbury Interior line?—Yes.

104. Is it still proposed to make the Canterbury Interior line?—I believe sections are being made which would come in eventually as part of it, such as the line from Oxford to Malvern, and it is proposed to bring it on towards the Rakaia.

105. Have you any more information to give?—I should like to read an extract from the report of the Royal Commission on the Railways, which is as follows: "Tinwald to Mount Somers: line already in progress. Cost of extension small. Will serve a large agricultural district, besides coal and stone."

106. What extension is that?—The line surveyed by Mr. Triphook.

107. That is the line as now built?—It is the same direction, all except the crossing of the river.

Mr. DUGALD MACFARLANE, examined.

108. *The Commissioner.*] Where do you live?—At Buccleugh. I am managing for the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company.

109. Where is Buccleugh?—It is at Taylor's and Bowyer's Streams.

110. It is being principally used for sheep?—Yes.

111. Your main products are wool?—Yes; and I believe it is the intention of the company to let it for cropping.

112. What is the total acreage?—A little over ten thousand acres.

113. What is the character of the land?—From good to inferior. Most of the land which would be served by this line would be good—like some of that in the district round here.

114. Are you of opinion that the extension as proposed on the plan would make much difference to your operations?—Yes; I should think that we would let our land much more readily, and more would be cropped. Already there have been some three thousand acres cropped near Rural Section No. 39571.

115. Which way do you take your produce to market?—At present we send it to Methven. I would not risk the produce at Anama, as there is no one to take charge of it. If there had been sheds, &c., at Anama, I should have sent it there in preference to Methven.

116. The present terminus at the Cavendish Station will be still nearer to you?—Yes, it is only four or four and a half miles from my place to Anama, but I drive round by the bridge, some nine miles, on account of the bad river-crossing.

117. You do not know anything about the minerals or timber in the district?—I know nothing about the minerals, but I know something of the timber.

118. There is very good timber?—Yes, very good.

119. How long do you think it will last?—I have not been through it sufficiently to form an opinion, but there is a good deal.

120. Is there much land in the district which has not yet been cropped?—Yes.

121. About half of the land in your district has been cultivated already?—I can hardly say from my own knowledge, but I should say that more than half has not been cultivated.

122. Is the district in your neighbourhood owned by small or large proprietors?—There are a good many small proprietors. The company sold, just before I took charge, a good many blocks to small holders who are interspersed around.