

242. Would you set your opinion against his?—Yes.

243. Would you set your opinion against that of Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Martin Kennedy?—Yes, certainly I would.

244. Mr. Maxwell says that the timber traffic would be from, 9,000,000ft. to 10,000,000 per annum?—Yes.

245. You set your opinion against that of Mr. Maxwell in that?—Certainly. There are differences of opinion, I think, with all these gentlemen. There is the Midland Railway Company's estimate and Mr. McKerrow's estimate, as well as others.

246. Yes, they all differ from each other. It is all speculative, I think?—Of course, it must be. But I do not think that remark applies to the expenditure.

247. Do you know what freights are being charged now for the carriage of timber by sea from Greymouth to Lyttelton?—I believe 3s. 3d. per 100ft.

248. I am informed it is 4s. 6d. per 100ft.?—I have never shipped timber myself, but I am told that is the rate.

249. How many run to the railway ton?—We generally reckon by the hundred. 500ft. would go to the ton.

250. As a matter of fact, does it cost something like £1, *plus* the haulage, to carry the timber to the port of departure?—I dare say it would. In the case of timber going to Lyttelton, you have to consider that you have to take it further. It has to go to Christchurch; and you may have the timber going to Timaru, Ashburton, and various other places in Canterbury. You have to add the haulage from Lyttelton to Christchurch, over six miles.

251. That means, of course, additional shifting?—Yes.

252. There would not be that shifting, of course, if the timber was carried by the railway?—No; that is the advantage of the railway.

253. By the information we have got from you now, it costs £1 per ton?—I said 3s. 3d.

254. That is the freight per hundred. That is 16s. 3d. per ton, and then there is the additional haulage?—I do not think the shipping companies' method of measuring timber would work out to 500ft. to the ton. They carry timber, say, 1½in. or 1¾in. thick, at the rate of 1in., which brings the total rate down. We on the railway adopt the principle of charging by actual quantity—whether it is 1½in. or 1¾in. The 100ft. charged by the railway may be a greater quantity than it would be charged for by the shipping companies.

255. That would not be a material difference?—In tongued-and-grooved timber the tongue is ¼in. to ½in., and the shipping companies do not charge for that, but in a 6in. board it makes a considerable difference in the charge.

256. Have you directed your mind at all to the cost of carrying a ton of timber by sea?—No; I have not done so. I know what we get for carrying timber between Southland and Dunedin—about 2s. 6d. per 100ft. The tariff rate is about 3s. 6d. between Invercargill and Dunedin.

257. That is because there is competition with the railway by sea?—Yes. They have to take the timber a short journey from Invercargill to the port, and then round to Dunedin by sea. They have to pay the haulage from Invercargill.

257A. You said you think the population on the West Coast has not increased?—I say this: that our experience in New Zealand is that our receipts increase 2½ per cent. per annum, taking the whole of New Zealand.

258. That is, taking the good lines with the bad lines?—Taking the whole of the railways. That is the experience of the past.

259. Are you not aware that the Wellington-Manawatu Railway receipts increased steadily at the rate of 11 per cent. per annum?—That is a district which was cut off entirely from railway communication.

260. Irrespective of the class of country, is not the West Coast in a similar position to the Wellington-Manawatu district?—Yes; but it is a different class of country. I think you will find that the passenger receipts by that company's line are now decreasing.

261. Hon. E. BLAKE: For how many years have they been increasing 11 per cent?

Mr. Cooper: For the year ending 1887, the first year, they carried 113,000 passengers; for the year ending 1895, the eighth year, 213,000 passengers, and there has been an increase; it is pretty steady now, but the second year there was an increase of 20,000 passengers carried.

Hon. E. BLAKE: Do you combine the mileage and the passengers?

Mr. Stringer: The two lines are so different that you cannot draw a comparison.

Mr. Cooper: I will put the report in.

262. Mr Cooper (to witness): You say it is different because the land is different?—There are a great many reasons more than that; it is a very difficult question. I have no doubt the Wellington-Manawatu Company could double the number of passengers by putting on a suburban service now. They do not do it because it does not pay.

263. Have you been over the Midland Company's line?—Yes, all of it.

264. The incompleted portions?—Yes. I have been over the road. I may qualify that by saying that I have not been over the road between the Inangahua Junction and Belgrove. I have been over the West Coast from Canterbury to Jackson's.

265. You say you base your estimate on the coach traffic?—Upon the capacity of the coach services.

266. Do you take into consideration the steamer traffic?—Do you mean from Christchurch to Greymouth?

Mr. Cooper: Yes.

Witness: No.

267. Mr. Cooper:] Are there not a great many passengers travelling by steamer instead of coach?—I should doubt it.