

9. But you have railways to Lawrence now. You cannot say that this would be another benefit to Lawrence?—Not to Lawrence, but it would open up trade between these other districts and Lawrence to a certain extent.

10. How long have you been connected with this petition, or in getting it up?—Oh, it is a few months since the matter was first mooted.

11. And did you not get up any statistics to show the probable traffic that would accrue to the railway? The petition states in general terms that there would be a large traffic, but——?—I do not know that there have been any exact statistics compiled.

12. How many horses are employed doing this work now, do you know?—I mean engaged in the through traffic from Roxburgh to Lawrence?—Oh, I suppose at the present time there would be about eighty horses—that is, the regular carriers on the road.

13. Are they employed all the year round?—Oh, yes. The number is considerably less now than it was twelve months ago. The quantity of dredging material is not going up now.

14. There would be at least the number I say continually employed, and even for a number of years to come—that is, ten teams of eight horses?—Yes.

15. What is the population of Roxburgh, do you know?—Oh, I think it would be about four or five hundred. Then there is Coal Creek, a distance of only a mile and a half or two miles, with a fair population.

16. What is the intermediate traffic such as this coal which you refer to? You say there are 800 tons of coal you supply to the dredges: do you think that would be a permanent traffic?—I think it is about the most permanent part on the river. The dredging there has been more successful than on most parts of the Molyneux. Miller's Flat is known to be very steady. There have been dredges working on that part for the last twenty-five years.

17. How long do you consider, yourself, that this dredging is likely to last?—Well, judging from my experience of that district, it might last another fifty years.

18. You say it might last?—Well, I think it will, because there are a great many of those who hold claims that have bank claims in addition to the river claims, and some are only just now starting to go into the bank claims.

19. What quantity of wool do you carry?—Well, I really could not give you an estimate of it.

20. Do you mean to say that the ten wagons on the road all the year round carry the wool as well as the ordinary goods?—Yes, I think about that.

21. Do you mean to say the ten eight-horse wagons will carry all the trade that is in the district all the year round?—Yes, I think so.

22. You were saying the main road is very expensive to maintain: do you think your county would contribute anything if a railway were constructed?—I should think they would be only too glad to do so.

23. You have no authority for saying so?—No; but we were in hopes of having the Chairman of the county up with us, but he was unwell, and could not come up. From what I have heard from him they would be very glad to do so.

24. Has this line from Lawrence to Roxburgh ever been authorised by Parliament?—It was surveyed as far back as thirty years ago.

25. You are not aware whether it has ever been authorised to be made?—I cannot say that it has ever been authorised. I remember the survey. Whether it was simply a flying survey or a survey simply for forming an estimate of the cost I could not say.

26. Do you think it would be a difficult line to construct?—No; with one exception. There is one hill, about six miles from Lawrence, and with that exception the grade is remarkably easy.

27. You say that Roxburgh is a dredging centre?—Yes, a large dredging centre, and also one of the largest fruit-growing districts in the South Island.

28. The development of the dredging industry during the last three years has led to a great deal of traffic up to Roxburgh?—Yes.

29. Has it been an unusual and abnormal traffic?—For a time it was.

30. Has that time nearly passed?—Yes.

31. It was a temporary pressure and strain, which has now almost disappeared?—Yes. But I do not think that that has affected the roads to any extent, as this year when the traffic had ceased they were very much worse.

32. Has that been owing to the congested traffic on the road or owing to the neglect of the County Council to keep the road in repair?—I cannot say that it is the neglect of the County Council. They could not do it.

33. I suppose it was a case of a chronic state of impecuniosity?—It would be a matter of impossibility.

34. *Mr. Tanner.*] Do the County Council rate up to the full limit of their powers?—That I could not say. I think $\frac{3}{4}$ d. is the present rate.

35. You are aware they can levy up to 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.?

The Chairman: Unless there is a Road Board.

36. *Mr. Tanner.*] Is there a Road Board?—No.

37. The County Council levies just half the rates it can levy?—Yes.

38. You speak of a saving to the county authorities by making the railway: would not that be transferring the expense? Would not that be transferring the expense to the central authorities—the Government? Would not the County Council be saving themselves in their expenditure by not having the roads to keep up?—To some extent it would. I think that is a matter that the County Council would be willing to meet the Government in.

39. You cannot give us any estimate of the amount of fruit at Roxburgh which requires to be transferred down by rail?—Well, during the fruit season there is a continual fleet of traps coming down every night; the road is lined with them. It is on a very large scale, but last year, owing to want of proper communication, many tons had to be thrown away altogether.