

FRED PURNELL examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman* : What is your name ?—Fred Purnell.

2. What are you ?—Clerk to the Manawatu County Council.

3. The Committee will be pleased to hear what you have to say in regard to this matter ?—In the first place I have to apologize on behalf of the Manawatu County Council for the absence of the Chairman, who was unable to be present. I have here a map of the locality. The proposed connection is from Levin to Greatford. At present the railway runs in the direction indicated on the plan. The proposed line is practically straight. The piece already made is from Foxton to Himatangi—the tramway already runs from Foxton to the Rangitikei River. The mileage is in Mr. McKerrow's report. In the petition it is stated that the Manawatu County Council are prepared to sell their tramway ; and I am authorised to say that so far as the ratepayers are concerned they are not over-anxious to sell the tramway, because they have in mind the advantages which they now possess which they would not have if the through line were made. It must, however, be admitted, that the through line would be for the general interest of the district, and, leaving out all personal considerations, there is little doubt that they would be prepared to sell the tramways according to arrangements. Mr. McKerrow's report, dated the 14th April, 1896, is as follows : "The Hon. the Minister of Lands.—In accordance with the request made you by the Hon. the Premier and the Hon. the Minister for Railways that I should report on the proposed line of railway, Levin to Greatford *via* Foxton, I have the honour to state that in company of Mr. J. G. Wilson, M.H.R., I went over the ground, 13th to 16th March, and at Foxton met a deputation comprising the Mayor (Mr. Nye), Messrs. Thynne, Kerr, Hennessy, and about twenty others, and at Levin, Messrs. Davies, Gower, Kebbell, Stewart, and Stuckey, who represented the local advantages that would ensue to their districts were the proposed line of railway made. The comparison of the existing and proposed lines in respect of distances, grades, and curves is as follows :—

Present Levin Station to Longburn Station on Wellington-Manawatu Company's line	M. ch.	M. ch.
Longburn Station to Greatford Station, Government line	24 52	
Distance Levin to Greatford by existing line	29 30	
Present Levin Station to Foxton by line <i>via</i> Moutoa Swamp, surveyed under direction of J. T. Stewart, District Engineer in 1879—nearly	11 40	
Foxton to Carnarvon Station	5 28	
Carnarvon to Sanson (steam tramway)	14 12	
Sanson <i>via</i> Bulls to Greatford Station, distance scaled from the 1 in. lithographic map	8 0	
	—	39 0
Proposed line shorter than existing line by		15 0

Then as to the grades and curves on the existing lines from Levin to Longburn, there is no grade steeper than 1 in 100, and only one 15-chain curve approaching Manawatu River, no other less than 20 chains radius. From Longburn to Greatford, especially that part of the line between Feilding and Greatford, the grades and curves are severe ; there are 118 chains of a grade 1 in 50 and other grades between that and 1 in 100, in all 5 miles steeper than 1 in 100. From Greatford to Longburn the grades are better, there being only 7 chains 1 in 50, and less than 4 miles steeper than 1 in 100. There are 5½ miles of curves ranging from 7 to 20 chains radius. In the part of the proposed line Levin to Foxton, there are only 67 chains of grade between 1 in 59 and 1 in 100, and only one curve of 20 chains radius. From Foxton to Greatford the line can be run nearly straight on easy grades. From the foregoing it will be seen that for all places north of Greatford the line *via* Foxton would bring them 15 miles nearer Wellington by rail than what they are now, and locally it would save the country between Bull's, Sanson, and Foxton a round by rail of about 30 miles on goods traffic. The settlers complain that for produce consigned to Wellington, this extra mileage is aggravated by their having to pay three short-distance rates—viz., on the steam-tram to Carnarvon, on the Government line Carnarvon to Longburn, and from Longburn to Wellington on the Wellington-Manawatu Company's line. For passenger traffic the inconvenience is not so great, as the country is well roaded, and generally the access is easy to one or other of the stations on the existing line. As regards the character of the two lines as to grades and curves, that by Foxton would be the better. It would be a very easy line to construct, the country being practically level throughout : the bridges over the Manawatu and Rangitikei Rivers, and the permanent-way for about three miles over the Moutoa Swamp, near Foxton, would be the only expensive items on the line. The Moutoa Swamp can be avoided by a *détour* through the sandhills, but that would add to the length of the line by about 1½ miles, thereby reducing the saving on the through distance to 13½ miles. The tram-line is along a public road almost straight from end to end ; there are no cuttings or embankments of any extent, the country being very favourable. It would be practicable to keep to the tram-line for the railway, although so far as adopting it to save expense on the construction of the railway on an independent line, it is hardly worth consideration, excepting the saving in cost of land and severance, as it is laid with old 28 lb. rails very much worn and in bad order. There would therefore be, after deducting the 5½ miles of Government line Foxton to Carnarvon, 34 miles of railway to construct. Further, as Greatford Station in its present position is unsuitable for a junction, and moreover it is undesirable to have another junction so near to Marton Junction, it would be better, therefore, to continue the new line alongside the existing line from Greatford to Marton Junction, 3 miles 16 chains, or in all about 37 or 38½ miles of railway to construct, which in the absence of detailed survey and estimates, should not be estimated to cost less than £200,000. Although it would be a decided advantage to shorten the distance by 13½ miles or 15 miles and save from half an hour to an hour on traffic from all places north of Greatford to and from Wellington, the present traffic would not warrant the outlay, for it would practically mean the division of the traffic over the two lines with the extra cost of maintenance and of additional train-services without corresponding increase of traffic. When