

local bodies interested, which all go to show that the local bodies generally are anxious for this work. The following resolution was also passed: "27th June, 1904.—That this meeting of representatives of the Manawatu County Council, the Horowhenua County Council, the Foxton Borough Council, and the Bull's Town Board request the member for Manawatu, and the member for Otaki, to urge on the Government the advisability of acquiring the Manawatu County Tramway and constructing a through line from Levin to Greatford or Marton *via* Foxton and Bull's." I may say, gentleman, that I am not a member of any local body at present. I have been a member for many years of the County Council and the Road Board, and I have lived in the district for thirty years. The above resolution shows the settlers are unanimous. You will see that the map shows the position of the railway. I do not know whether it has been explained to you, but it shows the whole district, and I may say that the whole of the land shown on plan, including the land outside of the pink border, has been described by Mr. Marchant, the Chief Surveyor, in the Year-book of 1898, page 596, as "some of the finest agricultural and pastoral land in the colony." It is also described by Mr. John Strauchon, Chief Surveyor, in the Year-book of 1903, page 667, nearly in the same words, as some of the finest land in the colony. He includes the area from Patea River to Paikakariki. I shall show that the land through which the proposed line passes is second to none in the colony. The portion of the land which will receive a local benefit is included in the pink border, taking in a portion of the Horowhenua County, south of the Manawatu river, and nearly the whole of the Manawatu County, and part of Rangitikei County. That is about forty miles in length and an average width of ten miles, which means four hundred square miles, and which is described as some of the finest land in the colony. I know of my own knowledge that that land is thickly populated, and the country has been subdivided into a number of farms, the Carnarvon Estate, the Oroua Downs Estate, the Waitohi Estate, and the Ohaki Farm. These have all been subdivided, and, therefore, the place is thickly settled. There are three dairy factories within the district and eight creameries, and that will give you an indication of what the district is. Of course, we claim that the line would be an advantage to the colony generally, at least to the North Island, as shortening the distance between Wellington and any place North of Levin, that is, by the coastal route, or central route. What I wish to speak of more particularly is the necessity for the line in the district in which I reside. The great difficulty we have had to contend with in the past is the want of roads in that district, and for this reason: that from near Sandon to right close to Levin there is absolutely no metal to be got, and were it not for the construction of this line of tramway, which is really a light railway, we should be unable to have roads metalled at all. I do not think that metal could be delivered in some parts of the county at £1 a yard, without the assistance of the trams. We have overcome that difficulty to a certain extent by making seventeen or eighteen miles of light railway. That serves a portion of the district as far south as Foxton, but from Foxton to Levin, a distance of about eleven miles, there is no metal and no metalled roads. There are two coaches running over that route at the present time—the road is not metalled. That is from Foxton to Levin, south of the Manawatu River. If we only had that portion from Foxton to Levin, it would serve the whole of that district for metalling, and at the same time give us the outlet which we desire from this end. The difficulty is this, we cannot now put live-stock on board our tramway to go to Wellington, because we have to go down to Himatangi, then *via* Longburn and down to Wellington, and the distance is so far round, and so disjointed, that it is practically no use. I have to drive my sheep across the tram-line and through to Longburn—a two days' drive. In the other case I should be able to put them on the train within a mile and a half of my gate, and the same thing applies to all the people. In going north from Ohakia, supposing one wanted to get timber from Taihape. (I may mention that all the timber has been cut in the Manawatu County. There are no sawmills left, the last one has been closed down, so that all the timber will have to come from north or south.) You can get timber right round by Palmerston and Himatangi to Ohakia, which is a distance of sixty-two miles from Greatford, instead of by the proposed route which is only five miles. The Minister said, when we interviewed him, that we could cart it. I want you to clearly understand that that is really what we have to complain of, that having spent £25,000 on the construction of a local tram—which no other county has, I think, done in New Zealand—we are now unable to use that tram as we ought. We lose the revenue which we ought to receive on our enterprise, and we have to pay for the upkeep of the roads. At Rongotea the output of butter last year was 233 tons, and at Glen Oroua 250 tons, and that has been carted to Longburn, and to Oroua Bridge. Instead of putting it on the tram, we have to pay the extra cost of carting it and pay the upkeep of the roads, so that we are placed in this position: that after going to the expense of constructing this line we are unable to use it, and still have to maintain the wear-and-tear of the roads. The matter of the maintenance of roads is becoming very serious in the Manawatu County. Of course it is only natural that you should want to know something of the probable traffic. I am not in a position to give any, or many, figures as to the probable traffic, and I do not wish to suggest that by the opening of the line there will be an immense increase of produce, but I would like to show that there would be a very great increase in the traffic by rail. In regard to the traffic at the present time, there are four coaches leave Bull's daily for Greatford, and return. There is a two-horse coach leaves Sanson for Feilding; one four-horse coach and two three-horse coaches leave Rongotea every morning for Palmerston and Feilding, returning at night. There are also two from Foxton to Shannon, and two from Foxton to Levin, making twelve altogether. In a country place, of course, people use their own vehicles, so that does not show anything of the whole traffic. If the line were through I could go to Wanganui to attend stock-sales as cheaply as I can go to Palmerston. I could almost go to Wellington and back as cheaply as I can go to some of the other places near home. By the opening of that line we should have a direct outlet for the whole of our produce. I think I have made it plain with regard to the butter and live-stock, that although we have a tram, and a kind of a connection, we cannot use it because the delays are too great. The live-stock would be cooped up longer than they