

1904.
NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC PETITIONS A TO L COMMITTEE:

REPORT ON THE PETITION OF THOMAS KING AND OTHERS: TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE THEREON.

(MR. SYMES, CHAIRMAN.)

Report brought up on the 30th September, 1904, and ordered to be printed.

ORDERS OF REFERENCE.

Extracts from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

THURSDAY, THE 30TH DAY OF JUNE, 1904.

Ordered, "That a Public Petitions A to L Committee, consisting of ten members, be appointed to consider all petitions that may be referred to it by the Petitions Classification Committee, to classify and prepare abstracts of such petitions in such form and manner as shall appear to it best suited to convey to this House all requisite information respecting their contents, and to report the same from time to time to this House, and to have power to report its opinions and observations thereupon to this House; also to have power to call for persons and papers; three to be a quorum: the Committee to consist of Mr. Hall, Mr. Hardy, Mr. Lang, Mr. Lawry, Mr. R. McKenzie, Mr. Remington, Mr. Symes, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Wood, and the mover."—(Hon. Mr. MILLS.)

TUESDAY, THE 2ND DAY OF AUGUST, 1904.

Ordered, "That the name of the Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones be substituted for the name of the Hon. Mr. Mills on the Public Petitions A to L Committee."—(Hon. Mr. MILLS.)

REPORT.

No. 545.—Petition of THOMAS KING, of Bull's, and 11 Others.

PETITIONERS pray that steps be taken for the completion of railway communication—Levin to Greatford.

I am directed to report that, in the opinion of the Committee, this petition should be referred to the Government for consideration, and that the evidence taken thereon should be laid upon the table of the House.

30th September, 1904

WALTER SYMES, Chairman.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 9TH SEPTEMBER, 1904.

Mr. J. Vile: Mr. Chairman, I presented the petition, you will remember, on behalf of the local bodies interested. I do not know that I have anything further to state than I stated at the time when I presented the petition, and when speaking on the Railway Appropriation Bill. It seems to me that it is a matter of some moment to the local authorities and to the people who are residing in this particular locality and through the Manawatu, and I hope you will weigh carefully all the evidence that may be brought before you so that at least if nothing happens now, by-and-by something may be done. Mr. Purnell, the Clerk of the Manawatu County Council, has the whole matter and a large number of points to put before you, the whole of which it may not be necessary to go into just now, as it will be laid on the table and afterwards made use of.

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

the through line to Auckland is completed and open for traffic it may be worth while to consider the question of constructing the direct line Levin to Greatford, but not till then. The settlers between Bull's and Foxton, although labouring under the disadvantages already mentioned, are, as regards railway conveniences, much better off than some other important districts in the colony. I would advise the Government to defer taking any steps towards the construction of this line for the present and until there is a considerable increase of traffic.—JAMES MCKERROW." There is a letter I propose to put in from the Public Works Department dated the 17th June, 1895, in which it is stated that the Government would not give its consent to the line going in to a private company. An agreement was made at that time to sell the tramway for £6,000, and it would have been fixed up, as a syndicate was prepared to take it over and work it at that time, but the Government refused to give consent to the working. The letter is as follows: "17th June, 1895.—GENTLEMEN,—In further reference to your letter of the 4th instant proposing that, in the event of the company you represent arranging for the construction of a railway between Levin and Kakariki, the Government should enter into an agreement with them for working the same, I am directed by the Minister for Public Works to state that after giving the matter due consideration, the Government is unable to see its way to agree to the proposal.—I have, &c., H. J. H. BLOW, Under-Secretary.—Messrs. J. P. Campbell and Alex. Jardine, Solicitors, Wellington." You are probably aware that the Manawatu district has gone ahead lately, particularly within the last five or six years, as is shown by the attached schedule.

I.
PROPOSED LEVIN—GREATFORD RAILWAY, MANAWATU COUNTY.
List of Electors.

Riding.						Number, 30th June, 1897.	Number, 30th June, 1904.
Sandon	..	..	..	..	..	106	147
Mount Stewart	..	..	..	..	..	58	145
Waitohi	..	..	..	..	..	49	80
Rongotea	..	..	..	..	..	108	125
Carnarvon	..	..	..	..	..	26	49
Kawakawa	..	..	..	..	..	33	71
Awahou	..	..	..	..	..	25	30
						405	647

Increase in seven years, 242 electors, meaning practically an increase of 242 families.
Increase, 60 per cent.

The increase in the number of electors is 60 per cent. since 1897. There is an increase of 242 electors, which represents practically 242 families, and that is mainly the reason of cutting up the various properties through which the tramway and railway will run, such as Oroua Downs, Carnarvon, Kaimatarau, Coupers, Rows, Waitohi, and the Government Ohakea Estate. This has practically subdivided the whole of the larger holdings that were held along the proposed route. In 1895 the receipts of the tramway (as attached statement marked II. shows) were £849 3s. 2d., and in 1904 they had increased to £3,257 16s. 9d. That is representing an increase of 382 per cent. in ten years.

II.
PROPOSED RAILWAY, LEVIN TO GREATFORD.
Statement of Receipts and Expenditure on Manawatu County Councils' Tramway.

Years ended 31st March.	Receipts.			Expenditure.			Years ended 31st March.	Receipts.			Expenditure.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1895 ..	849	3	2	1,057	5	0	1901 ..	1,986	1	2	2,034	8	9
1896 ..	1,180	16	8	1,422	17	10	1902 ..	2,397	8	3	2,141	5	10
1897 ..	1,440	16	10	1,258	18	1	1903 ..	2,873	13	3	3,196	12	7
1898 ..	1,776	4	3	2,029	1	1	1904 ..	3,257	16	9	3,690	0	0
1899 ..	1,750	4	5	1,809	0	0							
1900 ..	1,941	9	8	2,051	19	0							

A.

PROPOSED RAILWAY, LEVIN TO GREATFORD.

Manawatu County Council's Sanson-Carnarvon Tramway.—Statement of Goods carried and Fares collected from 1st April, 1902, to 31st March, 1903.

Date.	Grain.	Minerals.	Merchandise.	Manure.	Hemp.	Chaff.	Firewood and Posts.	Flax.	Pigs.	Timber.	Wool.	Sheep and Horses.	Metal and Clay.	Fares.
1902—														
April ..	Tons. 415½	Tons. 96½	Tons. 92½	Tons. ..	Tons. 43½	Trucks. 16	Trucks. 4	Trucks. 36	Trucks. 3	Ft. 5,803	Bales. 44	Trucks. 2 sheep	Trucks. ..	£ s. d. 6 4 2
May ..	138	22½	77	..	41½	14	10	24	4	13,164	..	..	1*	5 0 0
June ..	72½	6	82½	..	39½	8	5	23	..	12,652	..	..	12	6 3 4
July ..	54	18½	79½	..	37½	2	5	8	..	4,554	..	..	112	4 11 5
August ..	49	68½	81½	..	54½	5	5	3	..	12,200	..	..	18	3 19 3
September ..	90½	59½	75½	10½	37½	7	9	16	..	46,040	2	..	..	4 3 3
October ..	94½	99½	85½	28	54	9	6	18	1	42,600	112	..	78	7 10 2
November ..	16½	29½	88½	48½	49½	9	2	14	2	2,330	392	..	54	4 10 9
December ..	32	63½	66½	45½	50½	1	2	15	3	20,878	779	..	142	4 17 1
1903—														
January ..	8½	45½	10½	8½	52½	..	2	12	5	21,776	294	1 horse	132	43 13 10
February ..	48½	205½	60	8	54½	9	1	10	5	25,400	30	..	134	4 9 9
March ..	254½	32	86½	5	56½	2	7	16	4	21,349	40	..	156	4 13 1
Total ..	1,269	759½	978½	154½	571½	82	58	195	27	228,746	1,693	3	839	99 16 1

* Scrap iron.

B.

PROPOSED RAILWAY, LEVIN TO GREATFORD.

Manawatu County Council's Sanson-Carnarvon Tramway.—Statement of Goods carried and Fares collected from 1st April, 1903, to 31st March, 1904.

Date.	Grain.	Minerals.	Merchandise.	Manure.	Hemp.	Chaff.	Flax.	Pigs.	Timber.	Metal.	Firewood and Posts.	Wool.	Clay.	Boulders.	Straw.	Fares.
1903—																
April ..	Tons. 254½	Tons. 134½	Tons. 50½	Tons. 50½	Tons. 27½	Trucks. 14	Trucks. 9	Trucks. 6	Fl. 19,068	Trucks. 154	Trucks. 5	Bales 7	Trucks. ..	Trucks. ..	Trucks. ..	£ s. d. 3 7 11
May ..	264½	22½	52½	..	52½	6	11	8	26,761	142	7	..	..	..	..	5 0 11
June ..	174½	77½	44½	..	44½	..	14	4	29,087	230	4	..	..	..	..	2 13 4
July ..	135½	77	50½	..	50½	10	10	3	31,626	178	5	..	..	..	..	4 17 1
August ..	47½	44	62½	..	62½	6	..	1	47,653	172	10	..	..	..	..	4 16 0
September ..	101½	75½	34½	11½	34½	2	..	2	25,052	136	9	5	..	..	..	19 5 3
October ..	71	47½	27	57	27	1	2½	1	13,200	153	10	166	16	..	..	4 0 3
November ..	30	50½	27½	68	27½	1	..	4	20,100	108	5	211	11	4	2	13 7 10
December ..	55	74½	30	28	30	..	..	3	2,146	133	6	450	6	..	3	9 12 4
1904—																
January ..	64½	14	86	13	39½	..	..	7	17,000	197	4	382	..	..	..	55 6 1
February ..	78½	124	97½	..	97½	1	11	7	20,600	357	11	72	9	..	..	4 6 10
March ..	138½	68½	66½	2	50½	1	17	11	6,225	326	10	32	..	..	4	6 17 7
Total ..	1,416½	809½	979½	169½	516½	45	74½	57	243,218	2,286	86	1,325	42	4	9	133 11 5

I would like to draw your attention to the very small amount of fares that have been collected, only £99 16s. 1d. in one year and £133 11s. 5d. in another. The reason is that we have no through connection. The tramway, as it is often said, starts nowhere and finishes nowhere, and if we had through connection with the main line the fares would be very largely augmented. I have also returns showing the increase in the capital value since the 1st April, 1895, and the 1st April, 1904, the increase being a little over 50 per cent., from £782,659 to £1,178,560.

C.

PROPOSED LEVIN-GREATFORD RAILWAY.
Manawatu County Valuations.

Riding.		Capital Value, 1st April, 1895.	Capital Value, 1st April, 1904.
Sandon		113,289	157,034
Mount Stewart		100,891	151,686
Waitohi		113,396	157,334
Rongotea		131,037	195,985
Carnarvon		109,181	194,081
Kawakawa		114,801	170,125
Awahou		100,064	152,415
		<u>£782,659</u>	<u>£1,178,560</u>

Increase, £395,901=50 per cent.

Mr. McKerrow in his report stated that our line was in bad order and would not be suitable for the Government to take over. With reference to this, we wish to say that since that report was written we have renewed six miles with 40 lb. rails, and also increased the distance by three miles and a half extra, the extension being entirely relaid with heavy rails and first-class sleepers, and at the present time running Government rolling-stock, and the line has to be up to a passable standard before that is permissible, so that at least ten miles of the tramway should now be in a condition for the Government trains to run on it straight away. You will see from the map that the distance by tram and rail to Feilding and the north is practically prohibitory at the present time, seeing that the routes are very long and roundabout. At the present time we have two markets close at hand denied to us, the first being the Taranaki market, and the second one the main trunk line. At present we could do trade from the Sandon District with the Taranaki District and on the main trunk line in grain, produce, and general if that connection were made. I have here a schedule of goods that were carried in 1901 which is a fair average of the trade done since, and you will see that the whole of the grain and produce of our district has gone south of Feilding, proving that with this connection north there is a chance for our district to do trade with the north.

D.

LEVIN-GREATFORD RAILWAY.

Goods Consigned on Railways from Manawatu County Council's Tramway-line during March, April, and May, 1901 (showing Date, Consignee, and Destination).

- March 1. 170 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Palmerston North.
- March 6. 1 truck pigs, W. Dimock and Co., Wellington.
- March 8. 84 sacks oats, Ellison and Duncan, Spit; 84 sacks oats, Gammon and Co., Palmerston North.
- March 11. 166 sacks oats, Gammon and Co., Palmerston North; 140 sacks oats, New Zealand Loan and Mercantile, Wellington.
- March 13. 21 sacks oats, Prenter and Vile, Pahiatua; 140 sacks oats, New Zealand Loan and Mercantile, Wellington; 1 truck pigs, W. Dimock and Co., Wellington; 1 truck pigs, Nelson Bros., Woodville.
- March 15. 165 sacks oats, U.F.C.A., Palmerston North.
- March 18. 85 sacks oats, U.F.C.A., Palmerston North; 84 sacks oats, New Zealand Loan and Mercantile, Wellington; machinery, Prouse Bros., Levin.
- March 20. 212 sacks oats, New Zealand Loan and Mercantile, Wellington; 1 truck pigs, Dimock and Co., Wellington.
- March 22. 84 sacks oats, U.F.C.A., Wellington; 84 sacks oats, Monteith Bros., Woodville; 224 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Napier; 84 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Napier; 56 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Mangatainoka.
- March 25. 84 sacks oats, French and Co., Woodville; 1 truck chaff, New Zealand Loan and Mercantile, Wellington; 136 sacks oats, New Zealand Loan and Mercantile, Wellington.
- March 27. 1 truck chaff, New Zealand Loan and Mercantile, Wellington; 1 truck pigs, W. Dimock and Co., Wellington; 1 truck pigs, Nelson Bros., Woodville.
- March 25. 26 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Peri Peri; 74 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Hastings.
- March 29. 1 truck chaff, New Zealand Loan and Mercantile, Wellington; 84 sacks oats, Greenaway, Dannevirke; 84 sacks oats, Richter Nannestad Company, Palmerston North; 56 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Palmerston North.
- April 1. 50 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Spit; 50 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Bunnythorpe; 60 sacks oats, Prenter and Vile, Pahiatua; 1 truck chaff, New Zealand Loan and Mercantile, Wellington.

- April 3. 2 trucks chaff, W.F.C.A., Wellington; 2 trucks chaff, New Zealand Loan and Mercantile, Wellington; 1 truck pigs, W. Dimock and Co., Wellington; 84 sacks oats, Gammon and Co., Palmerston North; 168 sacks oats, Gammon and Co., Palmerston North; 100 sacks oats, U.F.C.A., Palmerston North; 50 sacks wheat, U.F.C.A., Palmerston North; 50 sacks oats, Gunning and Kiddle, Shannon; 2 trucks chaff, U.F.C.A., Wellington.
- April 4. 3 trucks chaff, U.F.C.A., Wellington; 1 truck chaff, New Zealand Loan and Mercantile, Wellington; 168 sacks oats, Gammon and Co., Palmerston North; 168 sacks oats, Gammon and Co., Palmerston North; 70 sacks oats, Simmons and Co., Spit; 84 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Takapau.
- April 9. 230 sacks oats, Simmonds and Co., Spit; 36 sacks oats, Gammon and Co., Palmerston North; 132 sacks oats, Gammon and Co., Palmerston North; 84 sacks oats, U.F.C.A., Wellington.
- April 10. 2 trucks chaff, U.F.C.A., Wellington; 1 truck pigs, Dimock and Co., Wellington; 1 truck pigs, Nelson Bros., Woodville.
- April 12. 84 sacks oats, W.F.C.A., Palmerston North; 120 sacks oats, W.F.C.A. Mangatainoka; 60 sacks oats, Prenter and Vile, Pahiatua; 100 sacks oats, E. Stevenson, Palmerston North; 1 truck chaff, Townsend and Paul, Wellington.
- April 15. 168 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Palmerston North; 84 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Palmerston North; 21 sacks oats, Cowlan and Co., Eketahuna; 28 sacks oats, R. A. Norde, Woodville; 84 sacks oats, U.F.C.A., Palmerston North; 2 trucks chaff, U.F.C.A., Palmerston North; 2 trucks chaff, U.F.C.A., Palmerston North.
- April 17. 1 truck chaff, U.F.C.A., Palmerston North; 168 sacks oats, Ellison and Duncan, Spit; 1 truck pigs, Dimock and Co., Wellington; 200 sacks oats, New Zealand Shipping Company, Wellington; 60 sacks oats, Prenter and Vile, Pahiatua; 20 sacks oats, U.F.C.A., Palmerston North.
- April 19. 32 sacks oats, Monteith Brothers, Woodville; 84 sacks oats, Robjohns and Co., Spit; 1 truck chaff, Miller, Palmerston North.
- April 22. 120 sacks wheat, Richter Nannestad Company, Hokowhitu; 168 sacks oats, New Zealand Shipping Company, Wellington; 84 sack oats, Robjohns and Co., Spit; 168 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Palmerston North.
- April 24. 55 sacks oats, Gammon and Co., Palmerston North; 55 sacks oats, Gammon and Co., Piri Piri; 72 sacks oats, Gammon and Co., Palmerston North; 84 sacks oats, U.F.C.A., Palmerston North; 84 sacks oats, Ireland and Co., Palmerston North; 57 sacks wheat, Richter Nannestad Company, Hokowhitu; 1 truck pigs, Dimock and Co., Wellington; 1 truck pigs, Nelson Bros., Woodville; 145 sacks oats, New Zealand Shipping Company, Wellington.
- April 26. 142 sacks oats, New Zealand Shipping Company, Wellington; 1 truck chaff, Townsend and Paul, Wellington; 100 sacks oats, Brewer and Bauckham, Ashhurst; 84 sacks oats, E. Stevenson, Palmerston North; 1 truck chaff, E. Stevenson, Palmerston North; 55 sacks oats, Gammon and Co., Palmerston North.
- April 29. 1 truck chaff, U.F.C.A., Wellington; 84 sacks oats, E. Stevenson, Palmerston North; 84 sacks oats, Ellison and Duncan, Spit; 50 sacks oats, James Miller, Palmerston North; 84 sacks oats, P. Hanlon, Ashhurst; 28 sacks oats, McKibbin and Co., Woodville; 55 sacks oats, Gammon and Co., Palmerston North; 80 sacks oats, New Zealand Loan Company, Wellington; 1 truck chaff, E. Stevenson, Palmerston North.
- May 1. 136 sacks oats, Ellison and Duncan, Spit; 84 sacks oats, S. Brown, Wellington; 70 sacks oats, New Zealand Loan and Mercantile, Wellington; 74 sacks oats, New Zealand Loan and Mercantile, Wellington; 2 trucks pigs, W. Dimock and Co., Wellington; 1 truck chaff, E. Stevenson, Palmerston North.
- May 3. 84 sacks oats, E. Stevenson, Palmerston North; 25 sacks oats, Goodrick, Featherston; 25 sacks oats, Willis, Featherston; 84 sacks oats, U.F.C.A., Feilding; 84 sacks oats, S. Brown, Wellington; 70 sacks oats, New Zealand Loan Company, Wellington; 84 sacks oats, New Zealand Loan Company, Wellington; 224 sacks oats, New Zealand Loan Company, Wellington; 1 truck chaff, E. Stevenson, Palmerston North.
- May 6. 84 sacks oats, New Zealand Loan Company, Wellington; 84 sacks oats, New Zealand Loan Company, Wellington; 84 sacks oats, Powell, Wellington; 56 sacks oats, Tonks, Wellington; 80 sacks oats, E. Stevenson, Palmerston North.
- May 8. 56 sacks oats, Gapper, Levin; 73 sacks oats, McArdle, Wellington; 40 sacks oats, Williams and Kettle, Spit; 120 sacks wheat, Barraud and Abraham, Palmerston North; 1 truck pigs, Nelson Bros., Woodville; 1 truck pigs, W. Dimock and Co., Wellington; 132 sacks potatoes, Grumwold, Palmerston North.
- May 10. 44 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Palmerston North; 20 sacks wheat, Reid and Gray, Palmerston North; 160 sacks oats, Williams and Kettle, Spit.
- May 13. 84 sacks oats, Williams and Kettle, Hastings; 80 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Palmerston North; 160 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Palmerston North; 50 sacks wheat, Richter Nannestad Company, Hokowhitu; 50 sacks wheat, J. Miller, Palmerston North.
- May 15. 84 sacks oats, U.F.C.A., Wellington; 80 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Palmerston North; 160 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Palmerston North; 60 sacks wheat, Richter Nannestad Company, Hokowhitu; 50 sacks wheat, Richter Nannestad Company, Hokowhitu; 84 sacks oats, Williams and Kettle, Napier; 84 sacks oats, Williams and Kettle, Hastings; 70 sacks oats, Anderson and J., Matamau; 1 truck pigs, W. Dimock and Co., Wellington; furniture, C. Tacon, Dannevirke.
- May 17. 122 sacks wheat, Richter Nannestad Company, Hokowhitu; 50 sacks wheat, Richter Nannestad Company, Hokowhitu.

- May 20. 50 sacks wheat, Richter Nannestad Company, Hokowhitu ; 120 sacks wheat, Richter Nannestad Company, Hokowhitu ; 68 sacks oats, Monteith Bros., Woodville ; 116 sacks oats, Williams and Kettle, Napier.
- May 22. 100 sacks oats, Williams and Kettle, Spit. ; 50 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Dannevirke ; 168 sacks oats, Patterson and Co., Gibbs ; 72 sacks wheat, Richter Nannestad Company, Hokowhitu ; 1 truck chaff, Barraud and Abraham, Dannevirke.
- May 24. 72 sacks potatoes, Grumwold, Palmerston North ; 1 truck chaff, Barraud and Abraham, Dannevirke ; 50 sacks oats, Barraud and Abraham, Palmerston North ; 84 sacks oats, U.F.C.A., Palmerston North ; 84 sacks oats, Patterson and Co., Wellington ; 116 sacks oats, Patterson and Co., Wellington.
- May 27. 252 sacks oats, Patterson and Co., Wellington ; 80 sacks oats, New Zealand Loan Company, Wellington.
- May 29. 1 truck pigs, Dimock and Co., Wellington ; 14 sacks oats, Mr. Port, Ashhurst ; 7 dead pigs, Dimock and Co., Wellington ; 1 truck pigs, Nelson Bros., Woodville ; 66 sacks oats, U.F.C.A., Palmerston North ; 76 sacks oats, U.F.C.A., Palmerston North.
- May 31. 100 sacks oats, Brewer and Bauckham, Ashhurst.

You will see in the return that the whole produce has gone south below Feilding. Mr. McKerrow, in his report, says that in the absence of detailed survey the estimate could not be less than £200,000 to construct this line ; but the conditions have altered since then. First of all, we have 14 miles 12 chains constructed—by Government railway and by steam-tram which is laid with rails 40 lb. to the yard—therefore leaving only twenty-four miles to provide for, and out of these twenty-four miles eight are constructed which would only need to be renewed with heavier rails. If £15,000 were provided for that, it would leave £185,000 to complete the sixteen miles untouched. As only eight miles of the tramway is required to be relaid with heavier rails, this would leave only the sixteen miles untouched, and this would, according to Mr. McKerrow's estimate, represent £185,000, which we consider would be doubly adequate to complete.

4. *The Chairman.*] What would be the cost of relaying the line with 40 lb. rails—the construction of the tramway with 40 lb. rail ?—It is from £1,800 to £2,000 a mile—you mean the extension ?

5. Yes ?—The extension would be from £1,800 to £2,000 per mile. That is entirely new work with 40 lb. to the yard and Government standard sleepers.

6. *Mr. Vile.*] I would like to ask what would be the cost to complete the remainder of the tram-line by laying 40 lb. rail—that is, that which is laid with 28 lb. rail ?—It would cost not more than £2,000 per mile ; probably the sleepers would have to be renewed.

7. *The Chairman.*] How many miles ?—Eight miles yet to be renewed.

8. *Mr. Lawry.*] Does the tramway-line cross the Rangitikei River ?—No ; it runs to the south bank. It is about a quarter of a mile south of the traffic bridge—not quite a quarter of a mile.

9. *The Chairman.*] This would complete the whole line that you have if this eight miles were laid with 40 lb. rail ?—Yes, 40 lb. rails throughout.

10. *Mr. Lawry.*] What is the distance from Greatford to the tramway terminus—about six miles ?—Probably it would be from the Pukenui Siding—six miles would be a liberal estimate.

11. *The Chairman.*] What about the charges by tram and railway ?—The position is this : that our tariff is drawn up on the lines of the Government tariff. There are some classes of goods on which our charges are higher, but in most cases the tariff is the same.

ALFRED FRASER examined. (No. 2.)

12. *The Chairman.*] What is your name ?—Alfred Fraser.

13. What are you ?—Town Clerk of the Borough of Foxton.

14. What have you to say in regard to this matter ?—This line will be of paramount importance to the inhabitants of the Borough of Foxton, because it will save twenty-three miles in the railway journey from Foxton to Wellington, which is the principal centre to which Foxton people go. To show you the traffic that already goes this way, I may state that four coaches leave daily from Foxton to the Manawatu line and return the same day—two to Shannon and two to Levin. At the present time there is a considerable quantity of goods being carted which are seaborne from Wellington to Foxton, and the Foxton carters are being paid 15s. a ton, and also a considerable quantity of timber is returned, and goes from Levin to Foxton. The return freight on timber is 2s. 6d. per 100 ft. There would also be a considerable increase in the shipping dues at the wharf at Foxton through the opening of this line, on account of goods being taken from there to Bull's. These dues would go really to the Government—mostly to the Railway Department. There would also be a saving of an hour in the through journey from New Plymouth to Wellington, which would be a considerable item in the carriage of mails and passenger traffic. The line now is considered by the settlers of the district to be warranted by the inhabitants, and by the considerable increase that has taken place within the last six years, a considerable portion of the district being under crop ; the bush is being cleared, and the country is being more closely settled than it has been in the past. It means only the construction of sixteen miles of the railway as six miles is already constructed, that is, from Foxton to Himatangi, and seventeen miles of the tramline is also constructed. There are no engineering difficulties in the way—two bridges to be built, but they are not difficulties. The residents of the district also think that the outlay would pay a very handsome return to the Government in the increased traffic that would go over the line. Of course, in addition to the number of people who use the coaches to Levin and Shannon, there are also a considerable number who go round, for the reason that the road between Foxton and Levin is unmetalled and a very rough road, and there is no metal procurable between Foxton and Levin. There are metal-

pits at Levin, and also at Pukerua. It would not be so bad if the road was metalled. At present the coaches have to make *détours* to keep out of the mud-holes, which are 18 in. to 2 ft. deep, and with no possibility of metalling them. The value of the property in Foxton is increasing steadily every year. I have not got the figures of last year, but the increase is £700 on the rental value. The population also is increasing. Although the rental value last year was slightly less than the previous year, it is a considerable increase on the past six or seven years.

15. *The Chairman.*] If this year is less than last year you cannot say it is an increase?—There is a difference of £5, I think. I mean to say the increase between this last year has not been so great as the increase of the previous year, but there is an increase of some £700 on the previous year, of the annual rental value of the borough, and it is still increasing.

16. You do not take the value every year—it is a periodical valuation?—The valuation is made triennially, and then there is an annual additional valuation, and it is that annual addition that I am referring to. The triennial valuation will be made next year, and it will be considerably above this. It is the rental value in Foxton.

17. You told us there were four coaches leave daily from Foxton?—That is so. They leave Foxton and return the same day.

18. Two to Levin and two to Shannon?—Yes.

19. Now if this line were made, would it do away with the coaches?—Undoubtedly.

20. How is there to be any increase from the line to Shannon if it is to run past Shannon?—If this railway communication opens, there would be no increase between Shannon and Foxton. Our interests lie in Wellington, and it is to approach Wellington that we want to get it. The difficulty lies probably in this direction, that the Government in letting the mail contract specified that it should go through Shannon because there is a small post-office at Moutoa, and for that reason the Government mails have to be carried to Foxton *via* the Manawatu line.

21. Do they carry a mail to Levin?—There is no mail, only a passenger traffic. The coach from Levin simply carries passengers and goods only. There is no subsidy for a mail traffic.

22. You say it would shorten the through journey by about one hour from New Plymouth to Wellington by going by this route?—So I am given to understand.

23. Then what you suppose by that is that the Government would change the through route from the present to this proposed line?—I think it is possible that the Government would see the advantage of sending mails and passengers by the shorter and much easier line, saving the curves and wear-and-tear on the rolling-stock. The goods-trains would very likely use the other line.

24. What is about the distance from Foxton to Levin?—About eleven miles. By road I think it is rather more than that. That is the route that the proposed railway-line will take, and the coach-route is perhaps between twelve and thirteen miles.

25. *Mr. Lawry.*] What would be the effect on the traffic of the Manawatu line?—Well, we have not considered the question of the Manawatu line. I suppose it would take a little from them. What we have been considering is the needs of the settlers in the district in regard to this line being constructed. The settlers all round the district are practically cut off from railway communication with this loop-line from Palmerston.

26. *Mr. Wood.*] First, I understand you to say you want the line from Levin to Foxton?—Yes, that is so.

27. You do not care where it goes in from?—We should like to see it go through Levin, because we should have through communication to Bull's.

28. You want the line constructed from Levin to Foxton?—That is so.

29. And you would like it to go on there to have communication with Bull's. Have you not got railway communication with Bull's?—Not by Levin.

30. The train goes from Foxton to Greatford, and it goes from Palmerston to Greatford, and you want another communication?—Yes; it is much shorter.

31. You say it would avoid the heavy grades from Foxton and Greatford?—I understand there are some very heavy grades. I can only repeat what I have been told, that there are heavy grades between Greatford and Palmerston and stiff curves on both sides, I believe.

32. *The Chairman.*] You said that the shipping facilities would be greatly increased if you had this line through to Bull's. Have you any communication now with Bull's for your trade by the tram-line?—Not to Bull's—it is a station this side of Bull's.

33. It is quite close to it?—It means cartage again. If we had the line it would obviate that charge altogether. It means two charges, and in the other case it would mean the railway charge alone.

34. Can you get goods as cheap over the railway as by the tramway?—I think not. There is the Government charge from Foxton, and there is the tramway charge thereon.

35. The tramway is higher?—The combined charges make it more than one charge would be.

36. The whole thing would be cheaper if it was the railway the whole distance?—Yes.

ROBERT BRUCE MCKENZIE examined. (No. 3.)

37. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—Robert Bruce McKenzie.

38. Whom do you represent?—I am here on behalf of the local settlers, and the settlers of Bull's generally.

39. The Committee will be very pleased to hear any evidence you can give in connection with this matter?—I have here a letter from the Chairman of the Bull's Town Board authorising me to act for him, as he is unable to attend—Mr. Thomas King. I have several resolutions here passed by the different

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

should be, and, therefore, the owners prefer to drive them instead of taking the roundabout way. We also send to the north—to Wanganui—and that is still more roundabout. The distance saved from Bull's, going south, would be twenty-four miles; from Sandon, going south, the distance saved would be twenty-two miles; going north, fifty miles; from Foxton, going south, thirty-four miles, and north, twenty-two miles. I would like to mention, also, that the timber is now all practically cut out of the district, and they will have to import coal for their factories. There is another point which I think ought to carry weight with the Government, and that is that the Manawatu County Council has never received anything in the shape of grants or Government assistance for the roads or other things that our neighbours have received. I mean in this way, that in the early days in the Rangitikei County, for example, they received very considerable subsidies on their rates. Then, after subsidies were reduced, the local bodies got a share of the land revenue, but the land was all disposed of in the Manawatu County before the Manawatu County Council came into working order, so they had no opportunity of getting it either way. What has been done has been done entirely by ourselves. There is no Government money spent on railways south of the Manawatu River, and if we can only get nine miles constructed it will serve for the metal and will be of great importance. It is ruinous for local bodies to try and metal these roads. We found it was absolutely necessary to put this tram down northward for the metal alone, and if we could get the southern piece put in it would be of more convenience to us and of great assistance. I do not know whether I should be right in making a suggestion, but I know what would be satisfactory to us, and that is, if we had the line authorised right through, and the Government would make some agreement with the councils to take over the tram, not necessarily now, but at some future time, and if they would construct the small portion south of the Manawatu River so that we could have an outlet to the Port of Wellington, that would serve us for a considerable time. The connection north could be made at some future time, and the tramway taken over by the Government when convenient.

40. *Mr. Lawry.*] Do you not think the railway would be better and more complete if continued on to Longburn?—Longburn is quite out of the line.

41. I mean when you get up to Bull's?—Not from Bull's. Longburn is right off the route altogether.

42. I mean Greatford?—Oh, yes; Greatford is the place we want connected. Mr. McKerrow's report suggests connecting at Marton, but all that is necessary for us is from the point marked on plan; he also estimates for eleven miles at the south end, while nine miles will be sufficient for our purposes, and five miles will be sufficient the other way. Some time ago a deputation interviewed the Premier at Levin, and he said it would be only a short time before this line would have to be duplicated. It would be far better to take the line from Levin to Greatford than to duplicate the other line.

43. *Mr. Wood.*] You said that would serve new country—what new country?—Is not the country all settled?—The country is all settled, but not served by railway.

44. All the land is now settled upon?—Yes.

45. Are they large or small holdings?—Nearly all small holdings—the majority.

46. What is the size of the holdings?—From 50 acres (about Rongotea) up to 200, and then some run a bit more than that, up to 500, 600, and 1,200 acres, and then there are one or two that go into a few thousands. Mr. McKelvie has more and Robinson has more, but there has been a great deal of subdivision; the Carnarvon Estate has been subdivided.

47. What was the size?—Some 8,000 acres.

48. What is it now?—I think the largest one would be 400 acres down to 100 acres.

49. Are there not some of 1,000 acres?—Yes; I believe Rowe Bros.' is 1,000 acres, but they have subdivided that again, and there are now seven or eight families on Rowe Bros.' estate, and they have a creamery in the middle of it.

50. If this line was put as you suggest, would it improve the value of the property?—Of course, it would be an improvement to the property right into Wellington, and even along by Palmerston.

51. Do I understand that your preference is that the line should go from Foxton to Levin?—Yes; from Foxton to Levin, but preference to what?

52. Preference to any other portion of it?—Yes; I think that would suit most settlers, but, as a matter of fact, it would be better if we had an outlet both north and south. We have a small piece in the middle that we cannot get the full use of for want of a proper connection.

53. Would it not be better with the connection made from Bull's to Greatford?—I do not know whether it would be better; it certainly would be good. It is part of the through line.

54. Would it be shorter?—It would be shorter to Wanganui.

55. And a convenience for carrying stock?—That would be all right going north, but it would not serve for stock going to Wellington. It would serve going to Wanganui. I think it would pay better to first put the railway in the country where there is no metal.

56. Would it not be better to construct it from Oroua Bridge to Linton?—That would not shorten the distance at all.

57. It goes to Oroua Bridge now?—Yes.

58. Or to Tokomaru?—I do not think there would be much gained. You would have to go through the Makarua Swamp.

59. Well, take it to Linton?—We should only gain two or three miles, and we should have to run along the flooding portion of the river, and there would be nothing cut off. There is a railway runs along on the other side now.

60. Instead of going roundabout to Foxton from Himatangi to Foxton and going round Linton again, is it not very much shorter from Oroua Bridge to Linton than it is from Foxton to Levin?—I should be ashamed to ask the Government to construct—

61. Is it shorter?—It would shorten it I think only about two or three miles.

62. You spoke about the metal for the roads being very expensive. What did the Manawatu County Council put the extension on to the present tramway for a short time ago?—Chiefly to get to a metal-pit.

63. To get metal from the Rangitikei River?—Yes.

64. To supply the whole of this place that you say the Government should build a line to supply?—No, sir.

65. You can get metal at the present time?—North of the Manawatu River we can, but south of the Manawatu River there is no means of getting it.

66. But you can get metal from south of the Rangitikei River and take it down to Himatangi?—Yes; and we can get it right into Foxton, but then it has to be carted nine miles from Foxton towards Levin.

67. Do you know there are any amount of districts in the colony that they cannot get metal to at all?—I dare say. I should say the best thing would be to put a railway in or to allow ratepayers to do so.

68. Do you know there was a line applied for to get to a gravel-pit, and it was not passed—the petition was not agreed to?—Yes. I suppose you refer to Egmont, and I hope it will pass this session.

69. Do you know that people have been burning papa in order to make roads?—Yes.

70. Yet you have the convenience with a little cartage. The question is have you got the convenience to carry this metal and to cart it?—No; because we have no convenience south of the Manawatu River.

71. That line of nine miles from Levin to Foxton belongs to Foxton?—No; it belongs to the Horowhenua County.

72. Is there no metal in the Horowhenua County?—Yes; there is some at Levin.

73. That is nothing to do with you as far as your county is concerned; it does not mean the expense of bringing the metal all the way from Rangitikei but the expense of bringing it down this nine miles?—We intended to bring it from Levin. This line would serve that purpose, also as an outlet for the district for our produce, and it would serve as a through line for the whole colony.

74. Have you not another through line from Wellington?—A roundabout line; this is a through line. It would simply mean shortening the distance for live-stock, &c. I have known trains to be delayed overnight with live-stock, and the Secretary for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has insisted on the trains being unloaded, which means expense. For live-stock it would be a great saving right through.

75. You do not ship your live-stock to Foxton at all?—No.

76. Then the contention that the line going to Foxton would benefit Foxton and would also be a benefit to shipping is not your idea at all?—Not for live-stock. There would be very little live-stock shipped to Wellington. It would be put on the train and go right through, but wool, &c., is shipped at Foxton.

77. You do not think it would be a benefit to you so far as the live-stock is concerned. If the line were from Bull's to Greatford, a distance of only three miles, which would shorten that distance considerably, would it not benefit the whole of those people who are bringing stock now; would it not help them considerably to take it from Bull's to Greatford?—It would be of great assistance to have a connection from Bull's to Greatford. Last year I sent sheep to Wanganui, and I had to drive them to Halcombe, so that it would be a great saving to have the connection at the north end also.

78. If you have it on the north end you have already your connection on the south end?—Yes, in a roundabout way.

79. *Mr. Lang*: I would like to know if you could tell me the difference in the distance in the present route from Greatford to Levin and the proposed route from Greatford to Levin?—Roughly, fifteen miles—between fifteen and sixteen.

80. And going northward from Greatford there are two lines available?—Yes.

81. And going southward from Greatford there is only a single line to take the traffic until you come to Palmerston?—Yes.

82. Going north from Greatford when you come to Marton the two lines join. This proportion of the line you propose would relieve the traffic of the other line?—Yes; it would be far more satisfactory to construct that line to relieve the other than to make a duplicate line.

83. What about its construction from an engineering point of view?—It is practically level from Greatford right through.

84. There are no engineering difficulties on this line?—None whatever. There are two rivers to bridge, and by the other route there are three rivers.

85. *Mr. Wood*.] You just now said that if another line was put down it would relieve the other line?—Yes.

86. There would be two lines to take the traffic from Wanganui and New Plymouth and also from Hunterville, and another line would relieve all the heavy traffic?—Yes; it would take a share of the through traffic.

87. And you would pick up the extra traffic and put it on to the single line at Levin?—Yes. I am going by what the Premier said, that as the traffic was increasing so much there would have to be a duplicate line. I have a *Gazette* return showing that the receipts per mile on the Wellington-Napier-New Plymouth Section of the railway is far greater than on any other line in the colony except two short lines to the coal-mines. The receipts were £1,200-odd per mile, far greater than anything else shown in the colony. That is including the branches to Greytown, the branch to Wanganui, the branch to Waitara, and the Toko-Stratford Branch, and when the main trunk line is right through the traffic will be enormously increased.

88. *Mr. Lang.*] Do I understand that there had been a block on account of the traffic?—I know trains have been delayed there—I really cannot say from what cause—and they have had to unload, and I was given to understand that it was because of a block in the traffic?—It may have been at some particular time, such as race or show time.

89. If this line was made as you suggest, it would be fifteen miles less, and of course a saving in the time when the main line is constructed right through the Island, and the probability is that all the important traffic would go through that way?—Yes; such as stock and things like that.

90. It would be the shortest and quickest line?—Yes.

91. But probably the people in Palmerston would object to this line?—I do not think so. I do nearly all my business with Palmerston. There was one of the newspapers in Palmerston suggested they should watch that line and what we were doing because it might divert the traffic. I replied by letter in the same paper that the people in Palmerston would rather have money spent on some railway or profitable work in their own neighbourhood, amongst their own clients and customers, than in another place. I pointed out, too, that at present our traffic does not go through Palmerston; our fat stock are driven to Longburn or Greatford, and our butter is carted to Longburn, our wool being shipped to Foxton. It does not go to Palmerston at all, and as for any traffic that would pass through, it could not be of any benefit to Palmerston to haul it through their station, or even in the case of passengers it cannot be of any benefit to Palmerston. A number of business people in Palmerston met me afterwards and spoke to me on the subject, and said they could not understand such parochial ideas, and that whatever would benefit us would benefit them. Our hospital and sale-yards, and other institutions are there. We have always supported Palmerston, and will continue to support Palmerston, and I do not think the majority of business people in Palmerston will raise the slightest objection. They recognise that it is for their benefit as well as ours, and they recognise that we are the back country of Palmerston.

92. *The Chairman.*] Is Foxton a “grading port” for dairy-produce?—No; there was some talk about getting a grading-station.

93. You say the timber has all been cut in the Manawatu County. You would have to import coal, and you would import it by Foxton?—Yes.

94. And the line would not help you?—Yes, for firewood, and probably they would get firewood from Taihape if the line was there.

95. Of course your county and the Manawatu County get their subsidies?—Yes; but I would point out that in the early days Road Boards got £2 for £1 subsidy. Just at the time the subsidies were reduced—in fact, to take the place of that—John Ballance brought in the arrangement that in lieu of the subsidies they should have a portion of the land revenue. The Government had sold all the land in Manawatu County at that time, so we never came under the large subsidies of the early days nor the land revenue of the later days. I should say, in regard to the tramway, that the section down as far as Rongotea has been renewed by 40 lb. steel rails. From there down it is 28 lb. old steel rails. The Council does not wish to lay that with 40 lb. rails if the Government is likely to take it over at a short time. We would like the line authorised right through, and some arrangement made about the tram in regard to taking it over when the Government feels disposed to do so.

96. *Mr. Wood.*] You want the Government to take over the tramway?—Yes.

97. The whole line?—Yes, and make a through line of it. There is no necessity to hurry that; the tram is paying very well. We are not anxious about that if we knew about the position in regard to relaying the eight miles.

98. *The Chairman.*] The tram pays more than working-expenses?—It does and it does not. It pays more than working-expenses if you charge only working-expenses against it, but they have been spending a little more on renewing the line out of revenue.

99. *Mr. Vile.*] You stated just now that instead of a duplicate line this line would save the necessity of the duplicate line to Palmerston North?—I do not know that it would save the necessity of it. The traffic might still cram, but it would certainly relieve it.

100. *Mr. Wood* suggested that it would necessarily have to be duplicated at Levin?—Part of it would go by the Rimutaka line.

101. When you got to Palmerston North the goods can go the other way?—They do go now—some of them.

102. *Mr. Wood.*] What, fat stock?—I do not know about fat stock, but manure does. The goods I get from Wellington come by the Rimutaka and round by Himatangi.

103. But going from Palmerston?—I think oats and the like of that will go by the Rimutaka.

104. *Mr. Vile.*] You mentioned about 450 tons of butter at Rongotea?—Yes.

105. Do you know there is a factory at Bull's?—Yes; it is a new factory lately started, and last year its output was 60 tons.

106. Do you know the country well between the Rangitikei River and Sandon?—Yes.

107. Do you know that is perhaps one of the best grain-growing districts in the colony?—Yes; round about Sandon it is remarkably good.

108. How many thousand acres do you think is adapted for grain-growing purposes?—I should say—it would be a guess—there must be forty or fifty thousand. I should think at least 50,000 acres round about Sandon of good grain-growing land.

109. Do you think it is the best in the North Island?—Yes.

110. You know, of course, that there are enormous quantities of grain sent down the Sanson tramway every year going out of the district?—I do not know what the quantity is, but there is a considerable quantity.

111. If the line was constructed right through to Levin, a great deal of stuff would go direct?—Yes. There is one point I omitted to state, and that is, that we lose a great deal of the by-produce

of our farms simply for the want of this connection, such as eggs, and straw, &c., and if we had the direct line from Rongotea it would obviate that; but we have three charges, the tram charges, the Government charges, and the company's charges, and it prevents that stuff going altogether.

112. *The Chairman.*] You could not tell the Committee what the county are likely to ask for their tramway—what they value it at?—I could not say. When framing the petition we ascertained from the Manawatu County Council what they would do about it, and the petition states that the Council are prepared to sell their interest to the Government on such terms as may be agreed upon by the contracting parties. I do not know what they ask for it, but it is a matter of arrangement. For my part as a ratepayer, I should be inclined to deal liberally if it were made part of the contract to have the line put through.

113. *Mr. Wood.*] You would like the Government to relieve the county of the tramway?—The tram is paying all right now, but we should be very glad to get something off it; it would help us to make our roads and at the same time save our roads by taking the traffic off them.

FRED PURNELL recalled. (No. 4.)

114. *The Chairman.*] Can you tell the Committee what the county are likely to ask for the tramway?—The position is that the tramway cost £25,000; the ratepayers are paying interest on £15,000 loans for tramway, and probably some such amount would be the basis; but, as I explained, the Council has instructed me to say that they are not anxious to sell the tramway because the settlers appreciate the advantages that the trams have, and that they would not have if the tram was made the main line of railway; but no doubt to the general interest of the district it would be an advantage to sell.

115. You are paying interest on £15,000?—Yes, approximately.

116. *Mr. Wood.*] That is the Foxton Borough, I presume?—No, the Manawatu County. The Foxton Borough was originally included in the Manawatu County, but eventually there was a severance. The Foxton Borough are paying a very small proportion of the loan—they pay about £15 a year—that is, the interest on the whole of their liability, £367.

117. *The Chairman.*] Is that the whole of the original loan?—It is a portion of the original loan.

118. What was the amount of the original loan?—Apparently it is not known, as our records were destroyed by fire. A certain amount was borrowed, but was not sufficient to pay the cost of tramway-construction. The rest of the money was advanced by the Government, and deducted from subsidies on general rates. For years the Manawatu County Council had no subsidy whatever.

119. *Mr. Wood.*] Do I understand that they will sell the whole of that line to Carnarvon for £15,000?—The position is this: the ratepayers are paying interest on not more than that sum of money. I am not authorised to say they would sell for £15,000, but I believe the ratepayers would be willing to hand it over for some such sum as that.

120. *The Chairman.*] What is the length?—Between seventeen and eighteen miles. Approximately, £25,000 was the original cost.

121. You have no authority for saying they would sell at that price?—No, otherwise than that I have listened to general discussions on this question.

122. You said just now that for four years the Manawatu County had had no subsidy?—The position is this: that the original amount borrowed—the exact sum I am unable to say—was not sufficient to complete the tramway, and I believe the Act under which they were borrowing money was repealed. I believe it was the Roads and Bridges Construction Act, and they had to get money from somewhere to complete this line. The Government was good enough to advance this money, which was repaid back out of the subsidies due for three or four years.

123. They had the subsidies?—They practically had the subsidies which were credited against the advance.

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