

- 17 You do not know what it would cost to make one, speaking roughly?—No.
 18. What class of formation are you going over now—just the rough country?—Well, most of it has been formed.
 19 I mean, not macadamized—just the rough ground?—Yes. Some of it has been shingled.
 20. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Have portions been metalled?—Some of it—not a great deal.
 21 *Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*] What would it cost to put a road in, roughly—£1,500 or £2,000, £3,000, or what?—If that much was spent on it it would improve it a good deal.
 22 You really do not know what a road would cost?—No.

WILLIAM GEORGE RUDD, Settler, Bennett's, examined (No. 8)

Hon. the Chairman We shall be glad to hear you?

Witness I am a settler in the back country of the Ashley district. I am renting a block of land from my father, and I have had about twenty years' experience in there. Since I first became acquainted with the district, settlement, instead of going further back, is coming more towards the centre, and the roads that we were able to take a trap or a dray along we can hardly get a pack-horse over now. There are up to thirty or forty thousand sheep on this back country that are brought out to the front country for shearing every year, and if we are caught in bad weather we are without feed for the sheep, and they naturally deteriorate in value, and we have to work accordingly. If we had a road so as to permit of our having shearing-sheds in the back country we should undoubtedly go ahead as far as pastoral interests are concerned. There are about seven or eight settlers out there, each running from three thousand up to about eight thousand sheep, and each one of these would put up a woolshed if we had roads to cart the wool out. If we had a road we should naturally go out there to live on the property, but we have not got a road, and it costs £5 10s. for cartage from the nearest railway-station to my place. That charge keeps us from taking any material at all out there, in the present state of the roads.

1 Would it cost you that when the weather is dry?—That is the charge in the best time of the year. At the present time we cannot possibly get a dray in.

2 How much do you pay in rates?—Between £50 and £60.

3 How much do you reckon was spent last year on the road that you are interested in?—I could not say.

4. Was it over £50?—I should say it was more than that.

5. There are several of you, and I suppose there would be an average of £50 each in rates?—Hardly £50, I suppose about £40.

6. That would be £240, at any rate. I think that if you were to get a loan, and pay a part of that money to redeem it, it would be better than the way you are doing—better than coming here to look after these thirds?—We should not be acting on a just principle.

7. How long is it since you purchased this land?—It has been in my father's hands for, I suppose, twenty-five years.

8. It is more than twenty-five years since the Midland Railway Bill was passed, is it not?—It was in 1886, I think, or 1885.

9 *Mr Witty*] You have known the roads for the last twenty years?—Yes.

10. Are they worse to-day than they were twenty years ago?—I should say they are fifty per cent. worse.

11. Owing to the lack of funds for maintaining them?—I should say so.

12 *Mr Lang*] If the local bodies had received the thirds and fourths, would that have been sufficient to keep the roads in order?—Yes.

13 *Mr Guthrie.*] How far are you from a metalled road?—Forty miles. My nearest way to a metalled road is over a pack-track. I have to pack my material on horses, in preference to carting it.

14. Roughly speaking, what is the value of the land there now per acre, freehold?—From £3 to £4 an acre—probably more.

15 Do you think that a loan would be a very heavy burden on you to make that road, seeing that you only pay £60 in rates on 19,000 acres?—I suppose it would be if we could not get the thirds.

16. *Mr Ell.*] What is your rateable value?—£2 an acre.

OBED FREDERICK CLOTHIER, Chairman, Waipara County Council, and Representative of the Kowhai Road Board, examined. (No. 9)

Hon. the Chairman What have you to say?

Witness I represent the Waipara County Council to-day in place of Sir George Clifford, who recently resigned, and I am also representing the Kowhai Road Board. You have the whole case before you. Mr O'Halloran is a good reaper, and has not left many straws behind for one to gather up. In our district we feel it a very grave injustice that we have been deprived of our thirds. Sir Joseph Ward asked whether we were aware of the fact that thirds were not paid before 1885. I was chatting with our Mr Gibb coming down in the train, and he said that in 1878, 1879, and 1880 land was leased and sold, and in each case where land was leased or sold, certain amounts were paid by the local bodies.

Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward By way of subsidy?

Witness By way of subsidy, and he also said that when land was sold a quarter of the value was handed over to the local body. Take Campbell's Happy Valley Estate, of 20,000 acres: Putting that down at £2 an acre, it meant that the Waipara County Council would receive £5,000. Now, it is a peculiar thing that on the eastern coast the Crown lands that have been leased and sold there have all paid in their thirds and fourths, but on the western boundary of our dis-