

45. But could trucks be procured and built that could travel equally well on the heavy or light line?—Yes.

46. It is only because of the peculiar construction of these trucks in being light that it is not advisable to take them along the main line?—Yes.

47. In your estimate of cost of transforming the company's line into one of standard gauge I understand you did not take into account the value of the present line: your estimate of £451,000 was over and above the value of the present line?—Over and above whatever moneys would have to be paid to the company for such parts of the line as would be made use of.

48. Have you formed any estimate at all of what value that line would be to the Government if they were to take it over and transform it?—No.

49. Do you think yourself that the traffic along that line from Putaruru to Taupo, supposing it were extended, would be such as to warrant the extra cost of making it a standard line?—No, I do not.

50. Did I understand you to say that the line at present built and existing there, if extended to Taupo on the same basis of formation, would not answer the purpose of that district?—It would answer the purpose of the district, most decidedly.

51. What would it cost to alter the curves, apart from the cost of bringing it up to the standard of the Dominion lines: would it be anything like as great as £450,000?—No, it would not be as much as that.

52. Did you form any idea of what it would cost?—I did not go into that.

53. In your estimate of £450,000 you must have taken into consideration the cost of altering the curves?—No. Where the line would have to be altered to bring it up to the standard the present line would have to be abandoned entirely.

54. Do you not think it would be possible to alter the present line by making better curves?—The curves could be improved slightly in places.

55. Are there many of those curves?—Yes, miles of them.

56. You could not form any estimate at all of what it would cost—you would not like to commit yourself?—No.

57. Do you think, if the curves were improved and the expectations of settlement in that district were realized, it would be possible that a light line might be worked at a small loss where a heavy line would involve great loss?—That is quite possible.

58. What is the nature of the country it passes through?—It varies considerably. Some of it is easy undulating downs country until you commence to climb over the Wawa Hill; then there is some flat land in the Waikato Valley.

59. What is the height of the Wawa Hill?—It is some 400 ft. or 500 ft., I should think.

60. Is that between the present terminus and Putaruru?—It lies between Putaruru and the Waikato River.

61. Is it between Taupo and the present terminus?—No.

62. Then they pass over it now?—Yes.

63. *The Chairman.*] You said in your report that the main line is ballasted with different material from the line between Rotorua and Putaruru?—Yes.

64. What is the main line ballasted with?—Pumicy gravel, I think.

65. Both lines are ballasted with the same material, then?—Yes.

66. We have had it in evidence that if the company's proposals are adopted the trains could run over the line up to an average of fifteen miles per hour, but they would have to slow down at the curves. That is really what you told us, is it not?—Yes.

67. We have been told also by the company, and I think it is on record in Mr. Coom's report to the company, that the alterations of the line could be made for £5,000 or £7,500 to enable it to run up to fifteen miles per hour: do you think that is feasible?—That sum of money would not cover any alterations to the curves; all it would be for would be the widening-out of some of the cuttings.

68. Mr. Coom says, "I am of opinion that had the banks been originally constructed to the full width of 10 ft., with $1\frac{1}{2}$ slopes, they could not have weathered to their present width, and it will be necessary to widen them before applying for a license to carry passengers. The work is not a heavy one, and I think the whole of the banks could be made 8 ft. wide at formation-level for an expenditure of from £300 to £400." That is with regard to the banks. At any rate, it has been given in evidence that the banks and curves could be altered for from £5,000 to £7,500 to enable trains to run at an average speed of fifteen miles per hour. Do you think that is possible?—I do not.

69. *Mr. Dalziel.*] Have you gone exhaustively into the question in arriving at these estimates?—Not by taking out quantities. I have only made up the estimates from my own judgment gained by long experience of railway-construction in New Zealand—from my experience as applied to this pumice country.

70. You did not spend much time in going over the line—one day on our line and one day over the other routes?—Two days on the other routes. Of course, I had some knowledge of the country.

71. Mr. Coom is a well-known engineer of high qualifications, is he not?—Yes.

72. And reliable?—Yes.

73. You know him well, and that is your opinion of him?—Yes.

74. Mr. Fulton is also an engineer of high qualifications, is he not?—Yes.

75. And also reliable?—Yes.

76. You might differ from him, but you believe he would give an honest opinion?—Yes. I would not rely upon his opinion as being correct, but I would rely on his honesty in giving it.

77. You know that his experience has been considerable?—Yes.