

3. What is preventing its greater expansion?—Of course, the bar and the river, which we are often stuck up with. At neap tides very often the boats cannot get up at all.

4. And owing to that you cannot get a regular service?—That is so.

5. Where do you find your vessels stick more often—inside the river or on the bar?—Inside the river.

6. You are not speaking first-hand, but you get reports?—Yes, we get reports. We are telephoning every day to Foxton and get reports.

7. Could you do a larger trade if you could be sure of a better harbour and therefore a more regular service?—Yes, we could.

8. Do you know of a cargo after being offered which did not go in consequence?—Very often. We are handed the transshipping-papers for cargo, and the shipment is taken away from us and the cargo forwarded by rail because of the service not being in time.

9. There is one class of goods which I think the trade has grown very largely in—kerosene and benzine?—Yes.

10. Is that growth phenomenal?—The growth has been pretty great during the last four years, and seems to be increasing all the time.

11. How do your charges compare with the railway charges?—They are considerably less than the railway charges.

12. What do you charge on benzine?—The railway charges rate and a half. I could not tell you the exact rate. They are treated as dangerous goods.

13. Those are all going by boat now if possible?—Yes. Kerosene is the ordinary rate, but benzine is rate and a half.

14. But kerosene is going also by the boats?—Yes.

15. Supposing the harbour were improved so as to get a draft of 12 ft. on the bar, would you put on better boats?—In that case we would run the "Awahou" more frequently.

16. At present do you run her to Foxton?—She helps the "Queen of the South" at spring tides. She is too heavy a draught for neap tides.

17. Would you be able to use her with that depth of water to the full capacity?—She can carry a full load of 400 tons drawing 10 ft. 6 in.

18. With regard to the produce trade with the South, would it be possible with a better harbour to do that trade?—Yes. Most of the produce goes via Wanganui now. It is taken by the Canterbury Company's steamers to Wanganui and railed back to Foxton and Palmerston. We would be able to take the cargo direct from the South.

19. What about sugar from Onehunga?—Of course, we could do that too if we could make payable trips. It is rather a long distance. We could bring a payable load down if we had sufficient depth of water on the bar.

20. Do you think the condition of the harbour inside has improved or gone back during the last four or five years?—It has gone back. We notice it by the continual stranding of the boats at bad places. During this year the "Queen of the South" and "Awahou" have been continually stuck up at bad places, which means a delay of a day or two or three days. That is inside the river.

21. *Mr. Myers.*] You have told us what you could do if you had 12 ft. of water on the bar. Has it occurred to you that if you had work done in Foxton which increased the depth of water at the bar that the wharfages would be considerably increased?—I do not know that we would mind. We would be bringing more cargo, and there would be greater revenue.

22. Do you think that with the expenditure necessary to get 12 ft. of water on the bar that your wharfages would be only 2s. per ton?—They may or may not.

23. Do you not know as a fact that there is no Harbour Board which makes so low a charge?—I think with the Railway Wharf—

24. I am not not speaking of that—I said "Harbour Board"?—Of course, the Railways are acting in the place of the Harbour Boards in several places, and their charges are the same.

25. Do you know that in Wanganui it is 3s. per ton, and in Wellington it was 2s. 8d. and is now 3s.?—Yes.

26. Do you know that at the present time the goods that go into Foxton are not charged haulage and handling charges, which the Railway is entitled to charge?—No, I do not know that.

27. Would you be surprised to know that there is a charge of 1s. and 1s. 6d. a ton which the Railway Department is entitled to charge but is not charging?—I know of some cases in which we are charged haulage.

28. Supposing your wharfage charge was increased to, say, 3s. and there was an extra 1s. or 1s. 6d. properly charged by the Railway Department for hauling and handling, that is going to make a big difference to the shipping trade, is it not?—It might kill some lines. Some are very finely cut as against the railway.

29. The trade your company has done with Foxton has very materially increased since the Manawatu line was taken over by the Government, has it not?—It has increased in the last few years.

30. Do you not know that it has increased because of Government assistance—you people and the Government prior to the Government acquiring the Manawatu line joined to compete, did you not?—I was not in charge at that time.

31. But you know it is so, do you not?—I know there was something of the kind.

32. And you know that since the Manawatu line was acquired by the Government that your trade has increased?—Our trade has increased of late years.

33. Supposing the Harbour Board made some kind of port charge, say, 1s. per ton on goods and 1½d. a bale on hemp, wool, and tow, for the purpose of improving the river and leaving