

107. He lays it down as an axiom that branch lines taken by themselves do not, as a rule, pay?—That is so, generally.

108. Those branch lines which do pay are main supporting lines?—That is so as a general principle, but it cannot be stated as an axiom.

109. It is a general rule?—There are exceptions, of course, but as a general rule it is so. They are feeders.

110. Is it not a fact that the most prosperous railway-lines have the greater number of branches?—I do not think you could say so.

111. Then Mr. Wellington is wrong?—No, I do not say that: he is usually very right, but it is the way that he is interpreted that is sometimes wrong.

112. Ought not those who have ultimately to determine this matter to consider the value of this line as a feeder to the railway?—That is outside my province.

113. *Mr. Myers.*] The evidence you have given is on the engineering side of the question?—That is so.

114. You have been asked about the grades in the neighbourhood of Kakariki?—Yes.

115. And we have been told that Mr. Hiley's scheme is to reduce those grades at a cost of £50,000?—Yes.

116. How much of that work has been done in regard to the amount of expenditure or the extent to which the grades have been reduced?—About one-third of the work has been done. Mr. Skerrett asked me a question, and I gathered the inference that if the £50,000 was spent in another direction in the deviation it might be a better proposition. Now, I want to say this: that whether the other line is made or not, it is absolutely essential in the interests of the economical working of the railway between Marton and Feilding that those ideas should be carried out, and that is the justification for this alteration of the railway. It is the economical working of the railways.

117. When speaking of the alteration, you are speaking of the reduction in grades?—Yes, and curves.

118. And is the rest of the work being proceeded with?—From one-fourth to one-third of the work is done. As soon as the Kakariki work is finished—and it is practically finished now—we then propose to start on the Greatford bank, which is the principal one after the Kakariki.

119. It is all part of the work within the £50,000?—Yes.

120. Does the reduction of grades on a line of that sort help in the reduction of congestion if there is congestion of traffic?—Any alteration to a railway which increases the capacity of the railway—and a reduction of grades always does—that certainly reduces any congestion.

121. Then you spoke about crossing-places: it is part of the railway scheme?—Yes.

122. The tendency is to increase the length of the crossing-places?—The number of them on a single line of railway.

123. You have congestion sometimes, have you not, between Paekakariki and Wellington?—Very serious congestion.

124. Is not that the extent of the congestion on the Main Trunk line?—Well, there is congestion between Auckland and Papakura.

125. Then let us take south of Marton?—Yes, there are certain individual localities between Wellington and Auckland where there is congestion, but south of Marton the biggest congestion really takes place between Wellington and Paekakariki.

126. And the Railway authorities have in mind the relocation of that line?—Yes. The Public Works Department made a special survey between Plimmerton and Paekakariki. We made certain preliminary investigations, and the Public Works Department has also made investigations, between Wellington and Tawa Flat.

127. Coming now to the question of the connection of the tramway with the railway, do you know of any private line in New Zealand which forms a loop with the Government railways—I mean junctioning at both ends?—I cannot call any to mind. I do not think there is one. I may say there is not one.

128. We have heard of the siding at Himatangi, but if you put in a siding at Marton does not the whole tramway become altered in that it becomes a loop and is no longer a private siding?—That is so, the conditions alter. The assumption which Mr. Skerrett was anxious I should take into my mind is an assumption which is never likely to happen at all. Where you have got a line like that it is not a siding at all—it becomes a loop with the main line.

AUGUST CHARLES KOCH sworn and examined. (No. 46.)

1. *Mr. Myers.*] You are District Engineer in the New Zealand Railway Department?—Yes.

2. And as such you have charge of the Engineering Branch on the Wanganui Section?—Yes.

3. That goes from where to where?—From Paekakariki to New Plymouth and the Foxton Branch through to Woodville.

4. You have made a recent inspection, have you not, of this Sandon Tramway?—Yes from Sanson to Himatangi.

5. First of all as to the formation: is the formation such in your opinion as that you could run ordinary Government trains upon it at present?—No, the formation would want widening and strengthening.

6. Are you speaking of only a part or the whole line?—Well, part of it. There are parts principally on the banks.