

HERBERT BUXTON SWORN and examined. (No. 48.)

1. *Mr. Myers.*] You are Chief Traffic Manager of the New Zealand Government Railways?—I am, yes.

2. The only question I want to ask you about is with reference to the suggested connection between the Sanson Tramway and the Main Trunk line at Marton. I want to know whether you think that is a reasonable or feasible suggestion?—I think it is not a reasonable suggestion.

3. And why?—It will merely give what is at present an unnecessary connection at considerable expense to the country.

4. We will deal with that aspect of the matter first. Why do you say it will be at considerable expense to the country?—It would mean that a certain amount of revenue which is now received by the Railway Department would be diverted; and there would be a very considerable expense in making and working those junctions.

5. As far as the construction of junctions is concerned, that would not be borne by the Railway Department. What expenditure do you say would be incurred in the working of the junctions, or what is the nature of the expense?—The nature of the expense would be in the handling of this additional traffic at these junctions which now passes through. The junction would then be a train terminal. It now passes through on the trains, and costs us nothing. It would cost us the same as other terminals under the junction arrangement as it costs now. We would still have to run trains past the junctions, and additional expenditure would be required in handling goods at each of those junctions.

6. What do you mean by “each of those junctions”?—In the case of through traffic, if there was any, which I am assuming there would be. We have our present arrangement which takes this present traffic through Marton and Levin. If we had to put it in at Levin and hand it over to our own management or the management of other persons we would have to handle it at Levin and again at Marton.

7. You can leave out the reference to Levin, because I am not asking you anything about the proposed new railway. I am only asking you about the junction of the tramway, which would then be a loop line from Marton to Himatangi?—In that case the same thing would occur at Marton. We would still have to handle that business again at a busy junction.

8. *The Chairman.*] What do you mean by “handling it again”—that you take the truck off one train and put it on another?—That is so.

9. That is what you mean by handling?—Yes. And there must be a certain amount of shunting done.

10. *Mr. Myers.*] That is the extra cost of working?—Yes.

11. Does that mean extra labour?—It would mean extra labour at Marton.

12. What about signalling—do you know anything about that?—I do not know anything about the cost of the installation of signalling.

13. Are you able to say whether the junctioning of the tram-line with the railway-line would mean extra cost so far as signalling was concerned?—Probably not of operation, but certainly of installation.

14. You are not then speaking as an expert on that point?—I know nothing as to the cost of installation.

15. I would like a little further information on this question of what you call two handlings. It means that your train would go on to Palmerston?—Yes.

16. What work have you to do then?—If we have traffic from the Sanson line which is going beyond Marton, in that case the traffic is taken from either Foxton or Himatangi to Palmerston, and is there made up into a train. When we get that on the train it goes to its destination, practically. A certain quantity of that is put off at Marton. If going through to the Main Trunk we have trains going in that direction, or if to Wanganui we have trains going to Wanganui. When the train arrives at Marton it is practically complete, but if there were trucks from Sanson line we would have to remarshal the train. If that traffic comes through Palmerston the train starts from there complete with the Sanson stuff in it.

17. At the present time I understand you regard this Sanson line as merely a private siding to Himatangi?—Yes, that is so.

18. Supposing it junctions with the Main Trunk line at Marton, does it alter its condition, so far as you are concerned—would you still regard it merely as a private siding?—No, it would then become a connecting branch of the line.

19. Would you call it a competing line?—It would be a competing line for certain business. We are referring now to goods that would go by railway. All the traffic for Sanson would not go by railway; some of it would be carted.

20. *The Chairman.*] Supposing you have a tramway running from Sanson to Marton the tramway would get the same goods as the wagons would. Supposing a man said, “Instead of sending the goods by wagon you send them by tram,” would not the only difference between a junction and a siding be this: that instead of taking the goods into the truck you take the goods out of the truck? Supposing the goods came by truck and joined on with your line, you might say that this truck is not suitable for our line, and we will not allow your trucks to run on our line. You would have to take the goods out of that truck and put them into another truck?—That is so.

21. You would take the goods out of the truck, the same as you would take them out of the wagon. Who is to pay the cost—it would fall on the owners of the goods?—Yes.

22. And you charge for that?—Yes.

23. There are three things: First, there is the joining of the railway by the siding: do you call that connecting with the railway?—That is a junction. If you are going to exchange traffic there it is a junction.