

149. Then it is to the advantage of the district that this loop should be opened, is it not?—No, I am not prepared to admit that it is to the advantage of the district, which is well served already.

150. Does it not follow logically?—No. It is not the local traffic we are dealing with; it is the through traffic we are looking after, and in dealing with the through traffic the interests of the immediate district is not large at all.

151. But it is the concern of the district?—No.

152. Supposing there were a connection made between Sanson and some point at Marton not connected with the railway-station: would not all the outward Marton traffic to Wellington go that way?—The outward Marton traffic, yes. I am not laying very great stress on the traffic to Marton. The point I am stressing is that it is going to interfere with and divert all our traffic for and from points beyond Marton.

153. That is not the desire?—But that is exactly what these people have stated in their correspondence.

154. First of all, you have control over the section from Foxton to Himatangi, have you not?—Yes.

155. And it is not proposed to disturb that. I understand the Greatford Station is likely to be shifted a few hundred yards nearer Marton?—Yes. That is in connection with the easement of gradients.

156. If a junction were made by a new siding at Greatford, would not that leave you in charge of important freight?—What junction are you talking about?

157. I am referring to either 1 or 2—a terminal, and without any running-rights?—One is transhipment.

158. Yes, and the other is the termination of our carriage on your railway-line, leaving you to pick up the goods again. What objection is there to that course?—There is the same objection there—you have competition.

159. Surely the mere fact of competition is not to be an answer to every suggested development of a district?—The mere fact of competition will be that in course of time it is going to have a very serious effect, and cause a very serious diversion of revenue in connection with the State railways.

160. I understand, then, that except as a business competitor there would be no objection to a siding junction with your line at or near Greatford or Marton, provided it was there handed over to the Government Railway Department and treated as a termination of the carriage of the Sandon Tramway?—Yes, there would be, because the experience in the past history of this country in connection with the Government railways is that immediately you give a concession, no matter under what conditions, you get persistent pressure, until ultimately what you originally intended has to be departed from, and a position is created that was never contemplated. That is exactly what we shall get at Greatford if any concession at all is made.

161. Supposing your fears prove in a series of years to be true, this line will carry a considerable amount of through traffic. You know you can construct a line at any time you choose from Marton to Foxton, and Marton to Himatangi, and that is the end of the tramway?—Yes.

162. And we propose to give you the right at any time you like—not a compulsory right, but an option at any time—to take over the tramway whenever it suits you?—The tramway is absolutely valueless to us.

163. Very well: what fear is there of this line becoming a real competitor to the Government? Directly it becomes a real competitor you can destroy it?—That is not the point. We know perfectly well that immediately you get this connection, no matter of what kind, whether it be a direct connection or a dead-end, you immediately set up or create what is practically a loop line. There will then be an insistent pressure for interchange of traffic, and an insistent pressure for the Government to take the tram-line over. That follows as a natural consequence.

164. That is a surmise, the value of which depends upon the point of view from which one looks upon it?—I am speaking after a very long experience of what has taken place in New Zealand.

165. I understand you suggest that an interchange of traffic is not possible without an improvement of the existing tram-line?

166. *The Chariman.*] The tram-line cannot carry bogie trucks?—It cannot carry bogie trucks.

167. *Mr. Skerrett.*] Is it professionally known to the Department that the interchange of vehicles from one line to the other is practically impossible? You have an interchange now at the Himatangi end.

168. Then why cannot that continue?—It does continue, and it is not proposed to stop it.

169. But why not continue it at the Marton end?—Because we consider it is not desirable to convert a tramway or a private siding into a loop line to deal with the main-line traffic.

170. Of course, there is no objection to the Sandon trucks, if there be Government inspection, running over your line?—Well, as far as I know they run their trucks on our line now.

171. But there will not be in future any objection—the objection arises from the interchange of Government trucks on to Sandon line in its present condition?—No; the objection arises from the interchange of traffic, no matter which way it is worked. The objection is to the interchange of traffic and extending the facilities that they have now got.

172. But if you are dealing with a particular objection—namely, the inadequacy of the tram-line to carry the heavier trucks of the Railway Department—does not that only apply to traffic from the Government line passing over the Sandon line?—Our objection to interchange is an objection under any conditions.