

*Kairanga County Council.*—"That in the opinion of this Council the proposed deviation of the Main Trunk line via Levin and Greatford is quite unnecessary, and will be a retrograde step, and that while large blocks of land in the North Island still remain undeveloped and are without means of communication either by road or rail, any expenditure on such a proposed deviation in a district that is already well provided with travelling facilities would, in the Council's opinion, be a national waste and absolutely unwarrantable."

5. *The Chairman.*] How far is the Kimbolton Township from Feilding?—Seventeen miles.

6. How far does the good land extend up?—I do not know it personally.

7. *Mr. Skerrett.*] It is clear, is it not, that those resolutions refer to the construction by the Government of an additional line from Marton to Levin as part of the Government railway system?—Yes.

8. Can you tell me whether the Palmerston North Chamber of Commerce considered the question whether the extension of the tramway to a point at or near Marton was objectionable, not as part of the Government railway system?—Yes, that was considered, but it was decided not to take any action in the matter. They remained neutral.

MELDRUM ALFRED ELLIOTT further examined. (No. 37.)

1. *Mr. Innes.*] You are an exporter and merchant carrying on business in Palmerston North?—Yes.

2. You deal in beef, mutton, wool, and produce of all kinds?—Yes.

3. And grain?—No, not much in grain. We used to do, but not now.

4. Do you know the present Manawatu County tramway-line?—Yes.

5. And the land in the vicinity?—Yes.

6. You know Dalrymple's and Wilson's land?—Yes, I have been over it.

7. It is suggested that those lands are suitable for subdivision: do you know whether that is so or not?—A large portion of it is not suitable, particularly down near the sea-coast. Those are the sandy ridges.

8. You are a member of the Palmerston North Chamber of Commerce?—Yes.

9. In your opinion and with your knowledge of the country is it likely that the extension of the tramway or the construction of a railway is likely to induce those large holders to subdivide their land?—I should say they have almost the same inducement to subdivide now as if the railway were put there. At no point are they more than seven or eight miles from an existing railway.

10. There is a lot of valuable land in the Kairanga on the banks on the Oroua River?—Yes, I have 800 acres there.

11. All that land is very highly valued?—Yes, from £50 to £60 per acre, and all occupied.

12. That land produces crops and sheep?—Yes, and farm-produce of all kinds.

13. Are those lands not as far away—an equal distance from the railway—as the Sandon lands are from Greatford?—Yes, practically. Their nearest railway-station would be Longburn.

14. There are a lot of lands near Awahuri, and Palmerston would be the nearest station?—Yes.

15. Do those lands experience any difficulty in getting their produce to the market?—No.

16. If you were buying sheep in Marton for Kairanga, would you bring them by train?—No; we frequently drive them down.

17. Do you know whether it is the regular practice of buyers in this district and in Hawke's Bay to drive them through?—Large flocks are driven through.

18. It is suggested by Mr. Purnell that the only people who would drive sheep through would be those people who were wanting cheap grazing on the route?—I do not think that is so.

19. You do not agree that droving is a thing of the past?—Certainly not. At present we are driving two hundred cattle from Stratford to Wanganui to the freezing-works there.

20. In your opinion are sheep or cattle knocked about in driving?—No, they do not get so much knocked about as they do in the trucks sometimes.

21. Do you know whether or not the Gear Company, of Wellington, drive their fat stock to Wellington from this district?—I should say they generally rail it from Manawatu lower down. From Otaki I should say they may drive it.

22. You have had some experience of straw chaff?—Yes.

23. I think you have heard the witnesses say that they generally burn it in Sandon because it does not pay to get it to the market?—I should say the demand for straw chaff is very intermittent.

24. You have recently dealt in straw chaff?—Yes. When there was a demand for straw chaff was last year, when there was a drought: there was a demand for any kind of produce; but the demand for straw chaff is very intermittent. In some seasons there is no demand at all.

25. Is the burning of straw chaff in the Sandon district peculiar to that district?—Certainly not. I have seen straw burnt even alongside the railway-line.

26. That is because of the risk of a market?—Yes, because in some seasons there is no demand. It would not be worth cutting.

27. *Mr. Skerrett.*] This Kairanga area is largely given to dairying and to the production of fat sheep, lambs, and cattle?—Yes, but there is some cropping done.

28. But only to a negligible extent?—Dairying and fattening are the chief things.

29. You know this Sandon Tramway has been in existence some thirty years?—For a long time, yes.

30. It is connected at the Himatangi end with the Government service?—Yes.