

*The Chairman :* I do not think we have anything to do with that.

*Mr. Myers :* What I mean is this : the Harbour Board is entitled to charge dues, whether as port dues or otherwise—

*The Chairman :* But the Railway Department would not be so foolish as to say that we shall put on a rate that will stop the railway being used and make it scrap iron. You have a railway there and it ought to be earning something.

*Mr. Myers :* Does your Honour mean as to the charge of 1s. 6d. ?

*The Chairman :* It may be eighteenpence or eighteen shillings. You must keep the Foxton Railway open : you are not going to close it up.

*Mr. Myers :* No ; but, on the other hand, we are not going to increase the loss.

*The Chairman :* You have to look at what will become of the railway.

*Mr. Myers :* Certainly.

*The Chairman :* Are you going to put on such rates as would encourage the traffic to Manawatu to be taken by motor traction ?

*Mr. Myers :* No ; but, on the other hand, this work cannot be done without being charged for. It is absurd to say that services of that kind rendered are not to be charged for. We have not charged for them up to the present, but that is because we have been getting the wharfage. My point is this : that the Harbour Board, assuming that the Railway Department retains the wharf, could obtain all the funds it requires for the work which it says it is going to do by charging something in the nature of a port due, or a harbour-improvement rate, of, say, 1s. per ton on ordinary goods and 1½d. on baled goods. It would then get as much revenue as it would by having the wharf, and the conditions would be very much more satisfactory to the district, because they would know then what money they had to spend and there would be no question of increasing wharfages. The whole of the net income is £1,700 a year. The Harbour Board speaks of putting on a dredge. Assuming the dredge does not cost more than £8,500— I should think it probably would cost more, but assuming it does not—the dredge is a vanishing quantity, and a sinking fund would have to be established. At the lowest estimate there is £500 or £600 interest and sinking fund, probably much more, and at least £1,200 per annum for working-expenses according to Mr. Howarth's estimate. That does not take into consideration administrative expenses or numerous other expenses which local bodies, we know, have to incur. Then what is the advantage even to the people in the district of this wharf if taken over by the Board ? I submit there is none. I submit that the wharf naturally comes under the control of the Railway Department, seeing that it is really, as it were, part of the railway, and that 95 per cent. of the goods, other than hemp and tow, pass over the railway. And the Department contends that it is not in the public interest that the wharf should pass out of its hands. That is all I have to say about the wharf, and the Commission will be glad to know that I shall not be anything like as long when I come to the other questions. The wharf question has to be considered to some extent in conjunction with the tramway extension, and I desire to emphasize the fact that the granting of these two requests together would have the effect of benefiting only the Sanson Tram and probably the motor-lorries between Sanson and Feilding and Palmerston and Foxton, and all this would be at the expense of the State railways. Even supposing there was a slight reduction in the cost of carriage of goods to places north of Foxton, who will derive the benefit ? The merchants and storekeepers, or the general public ? I venture to suggest that it will not be the general public. I had intended, of course, to address some observations with regard to the question of the suggested new railway between Levin and Marton, but that is no longer necessary by reason of the statement my learned friend Mr. Skerrett made this morning, and I come, therefore, to the question of the suggested tramway extension to connect with the Main Trunk line. My learned friend Mr. Skerrett, in his address at Palmerston, said that the local bodies seek no aid from the public purse ; but is that statement sound, or is it correct in fact ? I submit it is not, and for this reason : If the extension of this tramway is going to have the result of taking business from the State railways, then the extension would be made with the aid and at the expense of the public purse, because the taking of business from the State is precisely the same thing as obtaining monetary aid from the State. At all events, the effect is the same. My submission to the Commission is that the real questions, and indeed the only questions, which are asked in connection with this tramway extension are questions relating to physical connection with the Main Trunk line, although, as some suggestion has been made during the course of the proceedings in regard to a terminal siding or dead-end, I shall deal with that a little later. But I desire to point out to the Commission that the applications that have always been made by or on behalf of the Manawatu County Council have been requests or applications for actual physical connection. There never has been an application for a terminal siding or dead-end. If the parliamentary papers of 1910 be looked at—portion has been put in, though I think not the whole—it will be seen that when the petition of the Bull's Town Board was before the Public Petitions M to Z Committee, 1910, Mr. E. Newman said, "The point that the Committee have to consider is whether it is in the interests of the country as a whole that the petitioners should be allowed to effect a junction with the Main Trunk line at Greatford or Marton." Mr. Nosworthy then asked this question : "There is nothing to stop their taking the tram-line to within a chain of the railway-line, is there ?" and Mr. Newman replied, "Well, the money is to be procured under the State-guaranteed Advances Act, and the Government have refused to sanction the line ; but the local bodies are prepared to submit a scheme to make the line provided they can get the connection. The tramway would lose two-thirds of its value unless you connected it with the railway service, for you would have to tranship everything."

*Mr. Williams :* Is not that all in your favour ?

*Mr. Myers :* Yes, certainly. That is why I am referring to it.