

17. *Mr. Semple.*] What is the distance?—At the last Royal Commission Captain Ellis said there would be a continuous flight of trucks loaded to 10 tons. Mr. Dyson, of the Public Works Department, was asked what it would cost to build a road 12 ft. wide fit to carry that traffic, and he said it would cost as much or more than a railway. Now, imagine yourself with a mob of bullocks meeting on a 12 ft. road a continuous stream of trucks loaded with timber to 10 tons. The Public Works Department now has a fresh estimate made of the cost of the road, and I submit most respectfully that this Committee cannot give a proper decision in the matter until we have that estimate produced, with a reasonable specification to show how wide the road is to be, and what loads are to be permitted on it. It is all nonsense to call it a main road if you are going to restrict loads to $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons. It is all right for the tourist traffic, but it is useless for the settler. The upkeep of our roads is supposed to be small, but it is very heavy. The upkeep of main roads in three years has increased from £51 7s. per mile to £119 9s. per mile: those are main highways, metalled, and surfaced with bitumen.

18. *Mr. Kyle.*] But that includes reconstruction?—Those are the figures published by the Main Highways Board—I do not know how they arrived at them. In those figures there is not supposed to be construction work, but only maintenance. Now, the average charge per ton per mile on goods all classes and all distances carried on our railways is 2.41d. per mile. As to the charge on the roads, there is no such definite figure available, but the Government Statistician places it at over 1s. per ton per mile. Now, there is one factor which is often not taken into account in this question of competition between roads and railways. As compared with other countries, benzine in this country costs three times what it does in the United States. The truck itself costs twice as much. Spares and repairs cost four times as much. Notwithstanding this competition on the roads, on page 372 of the Year-book you will find a return showing that in 1928 our railways carried 7,360,000 tons of goods. Turning to page 405 of the Year-book we find that during the same year the motor-lorries carried 85,500 tons—or about 1 per cent. of the goods carried by the railways. That was in 1928. In the same year the railways carried 586,000 tons of manure, while the lorries carried 7,500 tons—about $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of what the railways carried. The motor-lorry looks to be a very important thing, but it takes fifty or sixty lorries to carry as much as one train, so that the substance of its load is not much as compared with that of the train. Now let us look at the passenger traffic. When I am in Auckland I generally stay with my sisters at Remuera, and if I am waiting for a tram between 8.30 a.m. and 9.30 a.m. I may see perhaps a hundred motors pass, most of them carrying only one man, but when a tram-car passes it is carrying seventy or eighty people, and you do not notice it. I think that the time has arrived when one man in a motor-car is not entitled to use so much of the road. If all the traffic now carried upon the railways were transferred on to the roads the traffic on the roads would become impossible. If we were to shift on to the roads about a hundred times the present traffic nobody would be able to get along. Mr. Barnes, the Commercial Agent of the Railway Department, addressing the Otago Farmers' Union, said that the whole of the railway freight charges amounted to less than £5,000,000; if the same goods had been carried by road the freight charges would have been £23,000,000; and he claimed that even if the railways do lose £1,000,000 they are a far better proposition than the motor-lorries. As these things affect our own district I would like to draw your attention to this. Taking Reporoa as the objective, manures brought by rail to Rotorua and thence by lorry cost 30s. 6d. per ton, whereas if carried all the way by railway they would cost 12s. Every ton of manure that we bring costs us 18s. 6d. more than it does to bring it to other lands similarly situated. The railway class comprising fencing-wire and clover-seed—to bring that by rail to Rotorua and thence to Reporoa by lorry costs 67s. 7d., but all the way by rail it would cost only 51s. 1d. Grass-seed by railway to Rotorua and thence by lorry costs 46s. 4d., but by rail all the way it would cost only 29s. Flour, grains, onions, potatoes, and the like, by rail and lorry, cost 38s., but all the way by rail the charge would be 19s. 4d. Hay, chaff, posts, road-metal, &c., by rail and motor 35s. 6d., but all the way by rail only 16s. 11d. If it is desired to develop the pumice area we must have the benefit of these cheap freights, and it is useless to ask us to pay the present huge freights by road.

19. *The Chairman.*] You said that in the past the timber interests had been very much against the construction of the railway because it happens to be the greatest timber area in the Dominion?—Yes.

20. When you said that, did you mean all the timber all round the railway-line from Rotorua to Taupo, or only the timber within a reasonable distance of the line?—All the timber that the Forestry Department had stated.

21. That that is the greatest timber area in the world?—No, the greatest area in New Zealand.

22. Have you any evidence to support that?—No.

23. You have not produced any so far?—I merely take the Forestry Department's figures for that.

24. You said that this question has been before two parliamentary Committees and two Royal Commissions, and they have all brought down unanimous recommendations in favour of the railway from Rotorua to Reporoa: are you sure of that?—Yes.

25. In 1922?—Yes, certainly.

26. Do you say that that Commission reported in favour of the railway?—Yes.

27. I must take your statement, but the report does not show that. I want to know whether you endorse that?—Yes. If you are referring to Mr. Munro's report, that only affects the railway from Rotorua to Taupo.

28. I am referring to the Commission's report. Perhaps I should read it for the information of the Committee. There was a certain order of reference given to this Royal Commission by the Government, and it was as follows: "To inquire into and report upon the following matters: (1) The extent of the traffic which may reasonably be expected to be conveyed over a railway between Rotorua and Taupo or the vicinity thereof (connecting with the present Government railway at Rotorua) if such first-mentioned railway be constructed. (2) The probability of such railway (if