

produce of which it does not pay to send up to Greatford, but it just pays by shipping it at the Rangitikei River. The communication at the Rangitikei River is only monthly, at spring tides, and therefore there is a very great and serious delay. For instance, in the case of my own firm, we send wool to Greatford in preference to sending it down and shipping it from the port of Rangitikei, and we get it done a shilling a bale cheaper. If the settlers six or seven miles below Bulls had the opportunity of putting their wool on the railway at Bulls, they would certainly send their wool this way instead of by way of Rangitikei River. Three or four of the settlers club together at Lower Rangitikei, and wait for a chance to ship their goods there. Therefore I have allowed a little more in this estimate than what I got at the station when I went to examine the books. A contractor has already offered to construct a line from Greatford to Bulls for £10,000. We show a probable revenue of £1,172, which would be a fair return on £10,000. There is no doubt that if, instead of waiting twenty-five minutes or half an hour at Halcombe, the train waited at Greatford—the engine in the meantime running down the branch line to Bulls—that would meet all the requirements of our 4 miles of railway; and I cannot see what there is to prevent its being worked in that manner. The working expenses would then be very small, and the line would give a fair return. The omnibus which runs between Bulls and Greatford received between £700 and £800 last year. The attendance at our sales is very large. We are in the centre of a very large agricultural district, and we dispose of about £20,000 worth of stock in the year. The average attendance at our sales must be a hundred people.

127. *Mr. Wright.*] I understood you to say that the settlers here ship produce at Foxton?—We send the produce on to Greatford, and round that way to Foxton. What we hope to do is to send it straight by railway from here to Foxton, and by Wellington.

128. I presume the goods go from Foxton to Wellington by boat?—Yes.

128A. Will you tell the Commission the cost per ton for shipping goods from Foxton to Wellington?—I am sorry I cannot say for certain, because it is done through the bank. We find that it is 1s. cheaper. I believe the last contract was 3s. 9d. a bale from Foxton to Wellington, but I am speaking merely from what I have heard people say.

129. Can you tell us what is the rate for carrying goods from Wanganui to Wellington by water?—I cannot say for certain, but it would be slightly in excess of the rate from Foxton.

130. *Mr. Clark.*] In speaking of the extent of grain-growing country which would be opened up by the Wellington-Foxton line, you mentioned yesterday an extent of 250,000 acres. Is not that land intersected at present by the line from Foxton to Wanganui?—Three-fifths of the extent of the land I mentioned would lie south and west of the present railway line. The proposed line of railway from Foxton to Wellington would open 150,000 acres of agricultural land.

131. *Mr. Wright.*] I understood you to say that land in this district has hitherto been of no value for agriculture owing to its distance from railway communication?—Yes.

132. What, in your opinion, is the distance from the railway that prevents the profitable cultivation of the soil?—That is a difficult question to answer. If we had a line direct to a large city we could afford to carry our produce a greater distance; but where we have to go to the expense of sending our produce to one port for the purpose of transshipping it to another port, it does not pay to grow the produce.

133. *Mr. Clark.*] But, in the event of your getting a railway line direct to the chief port of shipment, 30 or 40 miles extra length of railway would be, comparatively speaking, immaterial?—The longer the line the more it costs.

134. The object of my question is this: Supposing the longest line of railway communication between Greatford and Wellington is adopted—that is, by way of Masterton—at the present rate of railway charges the rate per ton would be something like 14s. or 15s. Then the question is, would that preclude the profitable growth of grain?—We would never send an ounce of grain by the railway to Wellington if the line came round by Masterton instead of by the West Coast.

135. That is to say, that 1d. a bushel would be such a heavy handicap that it would throw you out of the market?—It would be more than 1d. a bushel. The line by way of Foxton would be 63 miles nearer. If we had a line of railway by means of which we could put our grain into trucks and carry it by Foxton to Wellington, it would undoubtedly pay us to grow grain.

136. *Mr. Wright.*] Do you consider that the cost of transport by rail and water to Wellington at present charges precludes the profitable cultivation of land in this district?—I do. We cannot get our produce down to Wellington and make it pay: there is so much handling, and the charges are consequently very heavy. When we get our produce to Wanganui it does not go direct to the wharf.

137. *Mr. Clark.*] But it will do so very shortly, as it is intended to make the terminus of the railway alongside the shipping?—It will be just as much as we can do to make the grain pay when we get the line direct to Wellington.

FOXTON, FRIDAY, 12TH MARCH, 1880.

MR. ERNEST STEPHEN THYNNE sworn and examined.

138. *The Chairman.*] You are a land agent in Foxton?—Yes.

139. I understand you are personally acquainted with the character of the land between this and Porirua?—Between this and Waikanae. I have made a valuation of that country for the Government.

140. Then, perhaps you will be good enough to give the Commission some description of the country, both with regard to its value as timber country and its value for settlement?—The country lying between the Manawatu River and Otaki, from the sea-beach to the ranges, is practically level country. The open land extends from the sea-beach about 5 miles, and then from that line and up the ranges it is timber country. The timber consists of white pine, red pine, and matai—chiefly good red pine and matai. But on the Ohau River, about 17 miles from Foxton, there is a large patch of totara bush. The open land from the beach to the timber country is a light subsoil of sand, with a coating of black soil about fifteen inches in depth. As you get into the timber the subsoil is clay, with a gravelly surface. The Engineer for the county reports that on the road line from Otaki to Foxton he comes upon a gravelly surface, showing a good road line.