

taken in any other direction. It is not Foxton alone that is urging it, but the settlers north of us as far as Bulls. They have held meetings once or twice, and have been unanimous in the desire that the point of junction of the West Coast Railway should be at Foxton, on account of the facility they would obtain by the position of the line in saving the roundabout journey they would have to make if they wanted to send anything to Wellington by rail. There is another view to take of the question: The means of getting gravel for our roads between the Oroua River and the sea has been a matter of grave expense to the country, and the line between Foxton and Sandon runs through a very light description of country till it gets to Sandon. Therefore the settlers cannot carry along the road to Foxton such a heavy load as they can from Sandon along a metal road north of them to Feilding or Palmerston. The settler at Sandon sending his produce to Wellington has therefore, in preference to carting it over the line of road to Foxton, to draw his goods about 20 miles into Palmerston, and send them down to Foxton, some 25 miles, by rail, and thence forward them by steamer. The other view to take of the matter is perhaps an unfair one for us to urge—we only wish to put our own views before the Commission—and that is, that it would open up, in our opinion, very little Government land. It would be running two lines of railway parallel to one another, with a distance of only 3 miles between them, for a length of 12 miles. For most of its way from the starting-point it would have land for occupation to the extent of about a mile and a half on each side of it. It would also place the settlers down south of the Manawatu River in the position that they would be cut off from any advantage that they might obtain from the port of Foxton by rail.

158. *Mr. Wright.*] Can you say approximately what the population south of the Manawatu is?—It is not very large. I cannot say very well what the population is. The European population is about 197. There is a large population of Natives. We hope the railway will make the population. We consider it one of our grand arguments in favour of the railway that it will develop the land so as to get a population settled there.

Mr. GEORGE WARREN RUSSELL sworn and examined.

159. *The Chairman.*] You have heard the evidence which Mr. Thynne has given?—There are one or two matters in respect to which I could give some particulars.

160. Perhaps you will begin by supplementing in that respect Mr. Thynne's evidence?—I have as a journalist had to make this matter of the railway to Foxton a question of study. With regard to the land referred to as having been purchased, I have brought with me a return of the lands purchased in the North Island from the Natives, and of those under negotiation. In the districts of Waikanae, Otaki, and Manawatu the Government own 214,152 acres. Of this I will refer more particularly to some of the blocks lying between Foxton and Waikanae. There are purchased twelve subdivisions of the Manawatu-Kukutauaki Block, which comprise 27,125 acres. This land lies between the Manawatu and Waikawa Rivers. The distance is about 17 miles from Foxton. The Ohau No. 2 Block, also purchased, comprising 6,360 acres, is about 16 miles from Foxton. The Horowhenua Block, which comprises 52,000 acres, is about 8 miles from Foxton. Upon that the Government have a lien, having paid £1,114 upon it. Of the land that has been purchased, and upon which the Native title is extinguished, there are two blocks, called the Muhunua No. 3 and No. 4. As to the Muhunua Block No. 3, the inland road from Foxton to Otaki passes through it. It comprises 460 acres only, but immediately behind it is the further block, Muhunua No. 4, of 3,500 acres. A branch road would reach these 3,500 acres if opened for settlement. Lying between Foxton and Otaki, there are also in the hands of the Crown the Manawatu-Kukutauaki Blocks Nos. 4A, 4C, 4D, 4E, 4G, and part of 4B, which comprise 15,759 acres. Those blocks all have a frontage to the inland road. I would point out, in regard to the blocks of land mentioned, which comprise together about 20,000 acres, that the surveys have been completed, and may state that great surprise is felt by the residents in that part of the Manawatu District that this tract of country was not passed through the Native Land Court at the last sitting at Otaki. I state this upon the authority of a gentleman who resides in that part of the district. According to the census of 1878, the population of Sandon District is 607, the Carnarvon District 658, and the Foxton District 805. These three districts embrace a population of about 2,000. If the line were taken into Palmerston the distance to be travelled to reach the Wellington line would be so great that they would be almost shut out from the privileges of railway communication with Wellington. For instance, a man who wished to go from Foxton would have first to travel along the present line to Palmerston, 25 miles; he would then travel 20 miles back along the Wellington line, and would then be parallel with Foxton. He would thus have travelled 45 miles before he started on his journey; whilst settlers from Carnarvon and Sandon would require to travel along the district line to Carnarvon Junction, thence to Palmerston, and so on to Wellington. The opinion of the people who reside in the districts I have named is, that it would be a hardship that a couple of thousand people should be almost shut out from railway communication with Wellington by the line being taken into Palmerston. If the line were to come into Foxton the whole of the upper district would share in the benefits it would confer. No part of the district would then be deprived of the advantages, and Palmerston would have its line on to Wellington through Foxton. With regard to the Sandon Railway, the promoters are now waiting for the Governor's consent to the line under the District Railways Act. The plans and full particulars have been in Wellington for some months past. There is, of course, the shortness of the line from Horowhenua into Foxton as compared with Palmerston. The Commission will be aware, from the surveyor's report, that the distance from Foxton to Horowhenua is 10 miles 40 chains, and from Palmerston 26 miles 40 chains. That is shown by Mr. Blackett's report, dated 30th June, 1879. I would like to point out one fact—that is, that while the line from Bunnythorpe to Woodville, a distance of 14 miles 70 chains, is estimated, according to the Appropriation Act of last session, to cost £150,000, the line from Foxton to Waikanae, which will open up the whole of the South Manawatu country, including the Manawatu bridge, is, according to Mr. Knopp's report, dated 29th July, 1878, estimated to cost only £190,000.

161. *Mr. Wright.*] Are we to understand that the Native title has been extinguished over the whole of the blocks you mention, with the exception of that block on which you said the Government had a lien?—Yes. That is only one block of many upon which the Government have liens.