

*Mr. R. J. McKenzie:* Other districts have not expended the money we have.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* We do not object to the line going on as it has been.

*Mr. R. J. McKenzie:* The trams in Wellington compete against the Government railway.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* We have taken trains off Te Aro now. The Boroughs of Hutt and Petone, containing about twelve thousand people—much larger than yours—have tried to get a Bill through Parliament for a tramway, but they have been refused. Supposing the Government proposed to put a line alongside your tramway, how quiet you would sit.

*Mr. R. J. McKenzie:* We would be very thankful.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Not if you had to run your own at the same time.

*Mr. R. J. McKenzie:* We are entitled to serve the interests of the district, and desire to see it progress, and the way to do this is by the best and shortest possible means of carriage.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* We intend to look after the interests of the country as a whole.

*Mr. Pearce:* You do not generally refuse private sidings.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Private sidings are quite a different thing. This is a line of railway probably twenty miles long at least.

*Mr. Pearce:* And the whole reason for the Railway Department refusing is not because you think it would not benefit the district, but because you think it would injure traffic on the Government line.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Yes, as a whole.

*Mr. Nosworthy:* How about an arrangement so that outgoings must go on to the Government line, and not to Foxton?

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* They could not and would not bind themselves to that. As long as it is cheaper to take by steamer they do not care if the railways do not take a package.

*Mr. Nosworthy:* Do you find the rolling-stock free?

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* We give them trucks.

*Mr. Nosworthy:* Are the rates the same as on the Government line?

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* We do not interfere with the local bodies' rates. We do not get anything except what we charge for their trucks.

*Mr. Forbes:* You look upon this line, Mr. Millar, as an opposition line?

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Exactly—a line for the benefit of a particular section of the people.

*Mr. Duncan:* Do you think the tramway has been an advantage to the settlers of the district through which it passes?

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* To the settlers, but not to the Railway Department—at least not materially, because the stuff is sent down to Foxton and shipped.

*Mr. Duncan:* Does not the Government desire to give settlers as cheap a transit as possible?

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Not at the sacrifice of the people as a whole. If you approved of that you would be giving a particular advantage to the people of the district. At Oamaru we ran the railway in competition with the Harbour Board, and we will do the same thing to Foxton to-morrow if we have to.

*Mr. Nosworthy:* Will Government competition absolutely kill Foxton?

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Yes, as far as the Port of Foxton is concerned. They begged and prayed of us to take our coal from Foxton.

*Mr. Duncan:* I was just wondering, Mr. Millar, if you had ever looked upon the taking of the tramway as a business proposition. It would help to develop the country, and would be a feeder for the main line.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Have you been through portions of that country?

*Mr. Duncan:* Yes.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Can you settle it much more than it is settled at the present time?

*Mr. Duncan:* It is hard to say. Do you not think it would be a good business proposition for the Government to consider the taking of the line over, and connect it with a view to extending it to Levin?

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* It would be of no use. They are making a loss on the tramways at the present time, and they are charging Government rates.

*Mr. Duncan:* And it is not desirable to allow the connection for the reason that it would divert traffic from the main line.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* If the tramway were only going to take goods for those people on to the main line there would be no objection at all.

*Mr. Duncan:* It seems to be a serious thing that the policy of the Railways is in the direction of making the lines pay. It appears to be the first consideration, and there is no consideration in the direction of giving the settlers cheaper access to a port.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* That is absolutely incorrect. You cannot show me any part of the world where there are greater facilities for the farmers. If we take the railway charges for Australia we can get £2,000,000 a year more than we do now.

*Mr. Duncan:* Your reason for objecting to this connection is that it would divert some of the present traffic from the railway?

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Yes.

*Mr. Duncan:* You give no consideration to the fact that the settlers in that part of the district would have a cheaper means of getting their produce to market.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* It would affect the whole of the main lines. As soon as you agree to certain concessions the people all over the country want the same concessions granted, and that is why we are trying to prevent, as far as possible, coming into competition with Foxton. If we have any trouble with Foxton we will deal with Foxton in the same way that we did with Oamaru.

*Mr. Duncan:* I have much sympathy for Foxton.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* You cannot disassociate the Foxton Harbour Board from the Foxton Tramway.

*Mr. Nosworthy:* The harbour lives on the tram.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Yes.

*Mr. Newman:* I understand your objection to this is entirely because it would divert traffic to Foxton instead of to Wellington.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Yes, a large portion.

*Mr. Newman:* It is part of the policy of the Government that such a thing should not be done?

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Certainly.

*Mr. Newman:* I suppose it is part of the policy of the Government to develop marine matters, and it is part of the duty of the Minister of Marine to develop the colony's marine?

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Yes.

*Mr. Newman:* As Minister of Marine you would consider the advantages to the Port of Foxton?

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* They have a Harbour Board there. We do not interfere with them. The port does not belong to me at all. Foxton is a harbour of New Zealand now, and appears under the Harbours Act as having a Harbour Board.

*Mr. Newman:* If this connection were made you would still make it impossible to ship at Foxton in preference to Wellington?

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Yes.

*Mr. Newman:* It is marvellous. The Government candidate got a few hundred votes in Foxton.

*The Chairman:* Politics do not come into the discussion.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* How can you bring politics into it? A Government member had it in a Bill, but it was declined by the Government.