

45. *The Chairman.*] How many miles is it?—I am not sure exactly—it is about sixty miles.
46. *Mr. Myers.*] Are those the total expenses?—Yes.
47. What is the freight to Wellington from Southland?—The same freight—15s. 2d.
48. And what is the railage from Wellington to Palmerston?—10s. 8d.
49. Is there any wharfage charge?—Yes, 2s. 8d. per ton of ten sacks. That is about 4s. per ton to Wellington, and the cartage 2s. 3d. to 1d.
50. *The Chairman.*] There would be cartage in the other case?—No; the goods are discharged into the shed.
51. *Mr. Myers.*] Are there not some railage charges apart from the 3s. for wharfage?—No.
52. You say the charges are 15s. 2d., 10s. 8d. railage, 4s. wharfage, and 2s. 3d. cartage?—Yes; that is £1 12s 1d. as against £1 7s. 4d.
53. That is, coming from Wellington as against Wanganui?—Yes.
54. You do not get any goods from Foxton at all, do you?—No, practically nothing.
55. So that you cannot tell us what the railage from Foxton to Palmerston is on the same class of goods?—Yes, 5s. 1d.
56. What does that include—anything but the railage charge?—No, just the railage charge. The difference between Foxton and Wanganui is 4s. 1d. There is a further advantage in favour of Foxton of 1s. 6d.
57. Supposing Foxton has to spend money in dredging and that sort of thing, would you not expect the wharfage charge to go up?—I presume so. The margin between Wanganui and Foxton is substantial—it is 5s. 5d. per ton.
58. You would expect the wharfage to go up?—On the supposition you put forward that expense had to be incurred in dredging, &c.
59. You have been in Palmerston a good many years, I suppose?—Yes.
60. Do you happen to know what the Manawatu Railway Company used to charge for freight on the same class of goods you are speaking of from Wellington to Palmerston?—No, I could not say. That was before my time.
61. How long have you been in your present position?—I have been here twenty years, but in my present position about ten years. I do not know what they used to charge on the same class of goods.
62. And, of course, if you could manage to get competition between the Government as to railage from Wellington to Palmerston and the shipping freights from Southland to Foxton, you would be all the more satisfied—it would be so much the better for you, would it not?—Yes.
63. Supposing you could get your goods through Wellington at a trifle less by rail than shipping to Foxton and then railed to Palmerston, you would take the Wellington-Palmerston route, naturally?—Yes. I think there is this further factor, that it is difficult to define the potential value of Foxton being in a proper condition. The potential value cannot be defined in figures. We are only taking the business that has been done hitherto. I consider that if the river and bar were suitable other business which has not been included here would come in, all tending to an increased income to the Board and making it considerably easier for shipping, and presumably cutting down the average running-expenses.
64. You do not know, of course, the draught of the Canterbury Company's vessels?—I have an idea as a layman. I am not an expert in regard to it.
65. We may take it, at all events, as a result of your evidence that if a substantially good port were made at Foxton all the goods for this district would come that way from the South Island unless the Railway Department could compete?—The trade always follows the cheapest route.
66. So that the Railway would lose trade unless they brought their rates down to compete with the shipping freights?—I could not say. Probably the rate per mile which the Railway now charges from Foxton-Palmerston is greater income to the Railway Department than the rate per mile they now charge from Wellington to Palmerston.
67. *The Chairman.*] You mean they would get more money for the work done than taking it by a longer line?—Yes.
68. *Mr. Myers.*] But they bring up a considerable quantity of goods from Wellington to Palmerston and the neighbourhood, do they not?—Yes.
69. If the Port of Foxton were considerably improved I take it that the goods would come through Foxton by sea unless the Railway Department still further reduced its rates from Wellington-Palmerston in order to compete?—Yes.

MELDRUM ALFRED ELLIOTT sworn and examined. (No. 12.)

1. *Mr. Weston.*] What are you?—An exporter of frozen meat, wool, tallow, hides, pelts, and skins.
2. Carrying on business in Palmerston North?—Yes.
3. You are speaking now on behalf of people engaged in that class of business?—I am.
4. Supposing you could get a reasonable port at Foxton, is this statement [produced] an estimate of what you think would be done through that port?—That statement contains the number of bales of wool shipped from those various stations for the year 1915-16? [Statement put in—Exhibit K.]
5. A much larger quantity of wool would go through Foxton if you could get a better port, would it not?—Undoubtedly.