

*The Chairman* : I do not think there is any harm in his doing that.

*Mr. Skerrett* : I am afraid your Honour's statement that there is no harm in his doing that will be of no assistance to me. I want you to direct my friend to do it.

*The Chairman* : I think Mr. Myers ought to say what his objections are.

*Mr. Skerrett* : In general terms. I do not want details.

*The Chairman* : The principle on which he opposes it ?

*Mr. Skerrett* : Yes. I want a general statement of the reasons or objections I have to meet.

*The Chairman* : We think that should be done. We are not bound by the procedure of the Courts. We can allow what was known as rebutters and surrebutters.

*Mr. Myers* : I do not object to that. I will give my friend the information or make a statement in some general way.

*Mr. Skerrett* : My learned friend immediately tones it down.

*Mr. Myers* : Well, in a general way I will put it.

*Mr. Skerrett* : Those are all the observations I desire to make before calling evidence.

Sir JAMES GLENNY WILSON SWORN and examined. (No. 19.)

1. *Mr. Skerrett.*] You are Chairman of the Manawatu County Council ?—Yes, I am.

2. And you have been so for many years ?—For some fifteen or sixteen years, I think.

3. *The Chairman.*] Where does the Manawatu County have its offices ?—At Sanson.

4. *Mr. Skerrett.*] Would you mind stating to the Commission your general acquaintance and general connection with the Manawatu County ?—[Map referred to and points indicated.] It is bounded by the Rangitikei River, the Manawatu River, and the Oroua River. All the land marked white on the map is Government land and is composed of sandhills. There is a considerable amount of sand opposite the Rangitikei not far from the mouth. There is one piece of this freehold. The Railway Construction Act gave to the Manawatu Railway the land within twenty miles of the railway, and the particular area [as pointed out] between the Rangitikei and the Manawatu fell to the Manawatu Railway as freehold. It has now been sold and is freehold, but the rest is Government land rented by Mr. McKelvie, of South Rangitikei. The majority of the land southwards is composed of a series of lakes and swamps. The creeks are dammed up into lakes by the sand and in many cases the water cannot get away, and therefore makes a series of lakes in some places and swamps in others. Some of the swamps have been drained and are valuable for flax, but adjoining the sandhills is sandy country which, to the ordinary eye, may not appear very valuable perhaps.

5. It is grazing-land ?—Yes, it is grazing-land, and of a very particular value. In last night's *Standard* I happened to see the account of a sale which took place on Saturday last. All this land on both sides is served by the tramway, and the land coloured yellow was sold on Saturday last. "Six sections of the Pukipuki Estate, in the Himatangi district, were submitted to auction by Messrs. Abraham and Williams in conjunction with the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company. Three sections were sold, as follows: Section 1, 126 acres 36 perches (homestead block), to Mr. P. Brady, at £28 per acre; Section 5, 124 acres 1 rood 28 perches, to Mr. E. Christenson, at £27 5s. per acre; and Section 6, 107 acres 1 rood 27 perches, to Mr. F. Lucinsky, at £24 10s. per acre. The other sections are open to private treaty, and as there is inquiry being made by prospective purchasers it is anticipated these sections will soon be disposed of." That shows the value of the land is more than the ordinary eye would take it to be. It is turning out to be extremely good dairying land. There is plenty of water within a few feet of the surface. Sometimes there is too much water on it. In summer it is very good grazing-land, but in winter the low flats are covered with water. There is a drain through it which has been provided by the settlers. Some of the Awahou Block is very valuable land. Down the Manawatu River there is some very fine rich land. There is not a great deal of erosion going on there, but there is farther up, near the Manawatu Bridge. There are some very rich flats down by the Oroua. Mr. Douglas had some land there which was cut up and settled on by a hundred families and called Campbelltown, now called Rongotea. It was cut up into very small areas of 20, 40, and 100 acres, and some of the larger settlers have cut up the land amongst their children. It is exceptionally rich land, and one portion on the Sluggish Creek is said to be capable of carrying one cow to the acre, which is, I think, almost exceptional as compared with anything in the world. The land running between this sandy country and the Sandon stiffer country was rich bush, and portion was given to Dr. Featherston by the Government. On the left bank of the Rangitikei is all rich land. To the north of the bush is a piece of land which can be seen from Mount Stewart looking towards Bull's. Some of it is dairying, but it is not so suitable for dairying as other land. It is exceptionally good grain land. The farmers there have gone out of grain-growing because of the difficulties of transport. It is very good rape and turnip land, and much of the winter supply of fat stock comes from that district. The swamp land is not good rape land because it is a peculiar fact that it does not fatten sheep as one would expect. The land on the right bank of the Rangitikei, two or three miles from the mouth, is of a sandy nature, but the sand-dunes are narrow, but there is much rich land nearer the river. The area from Bull's to the coast is all interested in the tramway. The carriage of produce would naturally fall to the tramway. The lamb trade would never go by sea via Foxton. There will be competition from Wanganui, and the two Wellington companies and the two Christchurch companies will soon enter into the market. It depends on which buyer gets the stock as to where it will go. The cost of carting there is very considerable, and is avoided as much as possible.

6. *Mr. Williams.*] Can you give us any idea of the cost of cartage on the roads at present—the cost per ton per mile ?—A three-horse team at the present moment expects to get 30s. a day, and for a four-horse wagon there would be an increase in comparison.