

7. What would they carry?—Of course, a good deal depends on the road. I suppose a three-horse team would carry twenty sacks of oats. They do not like to cart chaff—it is a top-heavy load, and they send it by wagon. I could not tell you what the wagon gets.

8. *The Chairman.*] How many trips would they make between Bull's and Greatford?—Only one trip; but I could not be sure. I have always carted with my own teams. From Bull's to Greatford you can take practically only one load a day. The loading and unloading takes a considerable time. The reason is that you have to be quite sure the trucks are there, and the lack of trucks is of very great inconvenience to the country settler. If he goes to the station and then finds out that the trucks are not there, he has the journey for nothing, because you cannot leave chaff or grain outside.

9. Is there no shed?—There is, yes; but it means double loading. After having done that he has to stop and load it, and it is quite an art in itself to load a truck of chaff so that it will not shift, and to see that it is properly covered to be safe from rain. It takes a considerable time to load a truck of chaff. It is therefore impossible to get anywhere round Bull's more than one load a day to Greatford.

10. *Mr. Skerrett.*] In your opinion are the districts which you have just now described generally capable of increased subdivision and closer settlement?—If it is desirable to do so they certainly are. In many cases it is possible to divide them, as was instanced in the case of a man named Kilsby, who bought originally from the Oroua Downs Estate. The land was cut up into areas of certain sizes which they found suitable for settlement, and now they find it is suitable for cutting up into very much smaller areas.

11. *The Chairman.*] There has been a great rise in the price of produce and in the price of land?—That particular land has benefited largely by the fact that a new cheese-factory was put up.

12. *Mr. Skerrett.*] How long have you been living in the district?—I have been here since 1873.

13. And I think you have been connected with the affairs of the district both privately and otherwise throughout that period?—Yes, more or less.

14. I wish you would give to the Commission very shortly the history of this tramway?—I have mentioned the fact that this is a very sandy tract of land in the southern part of the county, with swamps to the west. There were no possible means of getting gravel to this portion of the county except by road until Major Atkinson brought in the Roads and Bridges Construction Act. If we had to get the gravel down the Sandon tram-line it would have cost 10s. or 12s. a yard. Fortunately, I was able to induce the Government to accept, in the definition of main roads, the word "tramway." That enabled the county to borrow money for the purpose of constructing a tramway, and the subsidy was granted as in the case of a main road. This land was all used for grazing in those days. The gravel we procured, however, was sufficient to gravel the main roads. Then the whole country became more settled, and naturally the people in the district wanted a port for their wool. We had to drive the wool all the way down to Scott's Ferry. That was a very expensive course, because it takes two days for the one load and return. The people south of Bull's want to get their stuff down to Foxton, but the Roads and Bridges Construction Act fell through its own weight. There was such a demand for money that the Government could not provide sufficient. There was therefore no means to extend the tram to a further supply of gravel, and so the Government had to be applied to for assistance. Sir Julius Vogel lent to the county £3,000\* against the Government subsidy, which was £500 a year. That extended the line to Sandon. We found then that settlement was going on very rapidly on the Douglas Settlement. They all wanted roads to get to their properties. Dairying was begun when the Douglas Settlement was cut up. Thus we had to consider the question of more gravel. We had exhausted the gravel to which the tram had access, so we required to extend the tramway to the river where there was an inexhaustible supply on the opposite side of the Rangitikei from Bull's. The county was able to make the tramway under the Tramways Act, which Sir Francis Bell brought in and passed, and all the tramways had then to work under that particular Act. We had, however, to get the Government's authority, and in Mr. Seddon's time we got permission to extend it from Sandon to the river. We then borrowed money and extended it to the gravel-pit. We have now almost exhausted that gravel-pit. The gravel-pit has two faces—first clay, then gravel, and then clay again, and then gravel; but we cannot go down to the lower portion because it is so expensive to strip the second strata of gravel. We are trying to double back on to the river where there is a large supply of gravel. At present we use between 7,000 and 10,000 yards of gravel per annum. Our traffic in some portions is extremely heavy and very wearing on the roads, so that we have a very large maintenance to provide for in that particular district in the southern end.

15. Will you tell us in a general way what has been the use of the tramway to the district, and how it has stood as a business proposition: has the tramway paid?—As much as many of the railways have paid. It has paid indirectly.

16. *The Chairman.*] You have got your metalling of the roads cheaper?—Yes, that is one point. The second point is that we have been able to take the heaviest business traffic away from the road. By that means we have saved our roads. If you take the actual figures of the tramway it has not paid, but it has paid indirectly. Some time ago when there was sufficient demand for grain we used to cart it to Feilding and Palmerston. That is very heavy on the roads. We now take that round by tram, which relieves the roads. If you take it from a commercial point of view the tramway has not paid, but it is showing such good results that I am sure in a few years the results will be such that we will be able to say it is a commercial as well as an economic success.

17. *Mr. Skerrett.*] Since 1902 the Manawatu County Council have been seeking provision to extend the line towards Marton, and connecting it at or near Marton with the Main Trunk line?—Yes. As a matter of fact, we had an offer many years ago from a private company to take the tramway over.

\* Witness subsequently wrote, "Since giving this evidence, which was given from memory, I find this sum was £2,000, not £3,000."