

32. *The Chairman.*] Where do you get the lime-supply from?—Mauriceville. There is a tendency to favour the Te Kuiti lime as being a nicer-looking lime. Lime is going to be an extremely important matter in our district, because in clay land there is always an absence of lime.

33. *Mr. Skerrett.*] Am I correct in saying that the danger of competition between the Port of Foxton and the Palmerston-Wellington Railway-line is limited to imports into Foxton?—Yes, I should say so.

34. And that connection already exists between Foxton and Palmerston at present?—Yes.

35. And it is only suggested that there should be an extension of five or six miles beyond that?—Yes.

36. With regard to exports from the Sandon district, do you know of any class of export which is likely to be diverted to the Port of Foxton rather than the railway-line by this connection—your fat stock will not go via Foxton, nor grain?—No.

37. If chaff is produced it will not go via Foxton?—No.

38. Do you know of any class of produce that will?—I do not know of any class except wool and flax. I think most of the flax goes down our line.

39. Is it cut green in your district?—Yes, we take down in the tram a good deal of flax from our district to the Foxton mills.

40. That is an entirely local Foxton production?—Yes.

41. You say the Palmerston people do not object?—I understand they do not. The idea has been created that we may want to do something else. Our desire is to see the connection made north, and we should be very pleased to see the connection south, of course.

42. Assuming that the deviation is constructed within a measureable distance of time, how is that likely to affect the prosperity of Palmerston North and Feilding?—I might say, first of all, that any extension of farming in that neighbourhood or in Carnarvon or Sandon districts, and any benefits gained or further produce turned out must eventually benefit Feilding and Palmerston. A large portion of the lower district has Palmerston as a market town. For the upper district the market town is Feilding, and it may be largely said that the money from there would be spent in the market town of that particular locality, and any extension of farming in the district which creates more wealth must benefit those two particular towns.

43. Your opinion is that the trade and prosperity of either Palmerston or Feilding will not be affected by the proposed deviation?—It comes into those two towns at present, and if you increase the produce turned out in those two districts it must necessarily increase the expenditure of money in these towns.

44. Feilding and Palmerston North are really the town market towns of the county?—Yes.

45. I think you have made it clear that the northern part of the Rangitikei County, the part above Rata, is a producing district for sheep and store cattle, and its complement are the lower part of the Rangitikei and the lower parts of the Manawatu County? It is so to a considerable extent now, and it must as time goes on increase.

46. You have spoken of the increase of population in the Manawatu County: where has that increase largely taken place?—In the southern portion—Rongotea, Rangiotu, the Carnarvon district, and anywhere where the land has been cut up for sale.

47. *Mr. Innes.*] Dealing with your last remark first, you say the increase of population in the Manawatu County has principally taken place towards the southern end of the county?—Yes.

48. That portion is served by the Foxton-Palmerston Railway?—Partly, not largely so. The Rangiotu district is distinctly served by that.

49. Is it not a fact that where the bulk of that increased population has taken place the districts are within three or four miles of the railway?—No.

50. Well, within what radius?—You could measure it on the map.

51. I suggest to you that 75 per cent. of the increase has taken place about Rangiotu?—No. It depends on whether you take the soldiers there.

52. No, I am speaking about the occupiers of land?—No, I do not think you are right in making that statement. In our county the greatest increase, I should say, has taken place farther west, but undoubtedly at Rangiotu it has increased considerably.

53. And just about Himatangi?—Yes, at Himatangi. Mr. Duncan has cut up his place there, and the number of settlers has undoubtedly increased.

54. The Carnarvon Township proper is purely a township?—Entirely, and not likely to be anything else. I hope to see the Government take that over and make it into a nursery, and plant trees on the sand-dunes, which they ought to do at once.

55. Has there been any increase in population down at Rongotea?—I am not very conversant with that. It has increased since I first knew it.

56. The land is held in small areas?—Yes; there are statistics there which will give that.

57. The Rongotea people, I believe, principally deal with Feilding?—Yes, two coaches run to Palmerston and one to Feilding.

58. Would the proposed railway affect them—would they not still come to Feilding and Palmerston?—Yes.

59. And the railway would therefore be of no assistance to them?—Not to get to Feilding or Palmerston. You are dealing with the passenger traffic, but our case does depend upon that.

60. I am talking about the passenger traffic and goods?—Goods are quite different.

61. Do you say the Rongotea people deal with Palmerston and Feilding?—The bulk goods from Wellington go by tram to Rongotea. We do not anticipate anything in the shape of passengers at all. The return will show the goods.

62. Does butter go from Rongotea to Foxton?—No, it will never go to Foxton.