

88. You have been at their meetings, have you not?—I do not know that they ever expressed an opinion.

89. Of course, Levin is well served with a railway?—They say not. They are very dissatisfied.

90. Well, the demand for the extension of the present tramway is principally by the Manawatu County?—That is so, yes. I wish to qualify that. The Rangitikei people have expressed a strong desire for it—so strong that they have attended our meetings and agreed to assist us in every way possible.

91. When you refer to the Rangitikei people do you refer to the Marton people?—I refer to the Rangitikei County Council and the Marton Borough Council. Both expressed themselves as desirous of helping us in every way they could.

92. You are not prepared to take steps to extend the tram unless you can get connection with the railway?—I would not. The late Mr. McKenzie, who, unfortunately, is not now with us, said we ought to make the tramway in spite of being refused connection by the Government, but I was more cautious than he, and said we ought to get permission first.

93. Why not extend the tramway and leave out the actual connection—what is your objection?—You can imagine what it would mean taking the tram to within a mile or half a mile of the railway and then having to stop. It would mean cartage from the tram to the railway.

94. The object is to get direct connection so that goods may be diverted from the railway without cost on to the tramway-line?—Yes, naturally we would take the trucks off the one the same as we do at Himatangi—take the trucks off the Government line.

95. Is there much traffic on the present tramway-line?—All those figures will be supplied to the Commission by Mr. Drew, who has the return.

96. How many days a week does the tram run?—It depends a great deal upon what we are doing. It practically runs every day in the week while we are doing gravel business. Mr. Drew is the manager of the tram, and he will give you all that information.

97. You have told us that the Sandon district has almost gone out of cropping and gone in for grass-seeding?—That is the most profitable at the present time.

98. That is the reason—because there is more money in grass-seed than in oats?—And other things. There is the question of labour.

99. Is not Palmerston and Feilding the market for grass-seed and crops that are grown in the Sandon district?—Oh, no. It so happens that at the present moment all grass-seed is sent to Feilding and Palmerston for the purpose of being cleaned. There are certain merchants who will buy it, but they will not tell you where they sell it to. A very large proportion of our grass-seed must go into the Main Trunk district, where it is newly settled country and where the bush is down. If they could get the extension the farmers who are go-ahead would put up a cleaning-factory in Sandon, and then would not need to go to Feilding or Palmerston. I think it stands to reason that if they could avoid taking it several miles away to be cleaned they would do so.

100. I suppose you know that as a rule the farmers in Sandon sell their seed to the merchants in Palmerston and Feilding?—They do.

101. And it is the merchants who clean it?—The merchants charge us for cleaning.

102. The merchants dispose of a considerable portion of it by the Main Trunk line?—Yes, a considerable portion of it goes up there.

103. Do you know, for instance, that last year, or the year before, Barraud and Abraham bought up the whole of the grass-seed crop of Sandon?—You had better ask them that. They stated so, but I do not know.

104. How far is Sandon from Feilding by road?—About eight or nine miles.

105. And from Sandon to Palmerston?—Nine miles to Awahuri, and about seven miles to Sandon—that is sixteen miles altogether.

106. And from Sandon to Bull's is four miles?—Approximately.

107. Now, there is no closer settlement going on in the Sandon district, is there?—It is very valuable land, and the farmers are very well off, and consequently they do not want to sell their land. They are not speculators—they are farmers.

108. Then what do they want a railway for?—To get a little more out of their land.

109. Would this proposed railway deviation effect any subdivision of land, in your opinion?—In every case.

110. Is there any land along the proposed route which is suitable for closer settlement?—A considerable amount. Evidence will be put in showing the land that will be benefited.

111. Now, one of the objects of running your tramway was to save the roads, was it not?—Yes.

112. And the wear-and-tear on the county roads has increased every year?—Yes, unfortunately—especially by motor-cars.

113. I suppose that is one of the principal objects for extending this line—to save the roads?—No, not now. We want to get our produce away.

114. The question of saving the roads does not enter into the matter?—Yes, it is a factor; but the question of gravel is the main factor.

115. Do you know the class of country between Levin and Foxton?—I have passed through it frequently.

116. Do you know it is subject to frequent floods?—No.

117. No part of it south of Foxton?—I should think scarcely any. There is some portion by the river subject to flood, but none between Levin and Foxton. Perhaps I am wrong. Between Foxton and the river the land is subject to flood, but it is only a small area. I have never heard of the land across the river being subject to flood.