

144. You are practically next door to the railway-line?—But if you did not want to send the produce away from Foxton it would probably go north.

145. But do you seriously suggest that the extension of the tramway is necessary for the development of the Himatangi Blocks?—Not necessarily, but beneficial.

146. *The Chairman.*] The saving in the distance would be small in the case of that block?—It would not benefit those people so much as others.

147. *Mr. Myers.*] You do not suggest that it has been kept in that way by the want of railway facilities?—No, because it has been conducted on quite a different principle. It has been in Mr. Barber's hands as long as I remember.

148. Do you say that the output of crops is greater now than it was, say, ten or fifteen years ago?—The statistics show the cropping-areas are similar.

149. So that as far as the export of crops is concerned northwards, that is problematical—except grass-seed?—Yes, except grass-seed.

150. The question of the export of grain northwards is problematical?—Not according to the quantity grown. Chaff is the thing we look forward to.

151. Would you say in what areas the dairying country is held, for the most part?—That first-class land a little south of Rongotea is held in areas of from 20 to 600 acres.

152. But, for the most part, what is the average area of the dairy farms in this Manawatu district?—You are speaking of the dairying part only?

153. Yes?—I say there is a difference of between 20 and 500 acres.

154. But, for the most part, the land is held in small areas?—I should scarcely say that. I should think the wealthy dairy people hold it in areas of at least 100 acres. It is very rich land.

155. *The Chairman.*] How many dairy cows would 100 acres keep?—One man and his wife can deal with twenty cows. If they have more than that number they must have labour. It is all a question of labour.

156. How many acres are required per cow?—I expressed the opinion that there is a small area—a few hundred acres in the neighbourhood—that will carry one cow to the acre, but as a rule it will require 2 acres per cow. The land which carries the largest number will probably require to be relieved in the winter-time to give it a rest.

157. *Mr. Myers.*] Do I understand you to suggest that there is a tendency for the dairy-farmers to give up dairy-farming and take on sheep-farming?—Not at present prices.

158. You think that is the probable tendency?—I think that is the likely tendency.

159. Do you suggest to the Commission that those farmers could work their present holdings with sheep only and make a living?—Yes, many of them could do very well indeed. If you go into lamb-fattening and conduct it properly you can turn a great many lambs off a small area.

160. But a great many of the farms consist of 20 and 50 acres?—It is quite clear they could not do much on 20 acres: 100 acres would be the minimum.

161. Then the smaller people could not do it without aggregation?—I should think not. The tendency with them would be to continue dairying, or to sell out at a profit usually.

162. Could you tell the Commission how many dairy-farmers there are in this district who have farms of 100 acres and over?—No, I could not. It would be mere conjecture on my part.

163. You have put in the statistics of the Manawatu County by way of comparison between 1900 and 1911, but may we not take it that a large portion of the Manawatu County is already efficiently and sufficiently served by the existing railway, and would not derive any benefit at all from the new line or from your suggested extension?—I have already said that there is a portion of the Manawatu County that we do not claim has any benefit, and I have tried to point out how it would not be affected.

164. You cannot split up these statistics in order to show how much land and how many people would derive direct benefit from your tramway extension and how many would not—I take it that is impossible?—No, not impossible.

165. Or impracticable?—No, not impracticable. If the Commission desires that information we can get it from our rate-books.

166. I understood Mr. Skerrett in his opening and you in your evidence to say that the trade which really, in your opinion, necessitates this extension has arisen in consequence of the opening-up of the Main Trunk line?—We talked about extending it a long time before that, but it has greatly increased since the Main Trunk line opened.

167. Do you think the extension would have been justified before the Main Trunk line was opened up and completed?—Yes, certainly it would, because the conditions changed rapidly.

168. As a matter of fact, the Bull's Town Board petitioned Parliament in 1904 for what it called the completion of railway communication from Levin to Greatford?—I did not take any part in that.

169. Do you think it would have been justified then?—Yes, I think distinctly so. You must understand that the alteration of settlement in New Zealand is very rapid. Take, for example, Taranaki: we had an excellent market in Taranaki for many years which we have not got now.

170. I am speaking now of the permanent new line or deviation, and not the mere extension?—I beg your pardon: we are at cross-purposes.

171. I ask you whether you think a new line from Levin to Greatford or Marton would have been justified in 1904?—I think it was quite a reasonable thing to wait until the Main Trunk line was opened.

172. You were not supporting this petition in 1904?—Yes, because, in a way, I was a politician in those days.

173. You have spoken of the price of petrol being, I think, 2s. a gallon?—Yes; but it is higher now. It has gone up very rapidly lately.