

174. The pre-war price was a good deal less?—I think about 1s. 5d. per gallon. The price I mentioned yesterday was not the normal price.

175. I suppose you have seen motor-lorries about the district, have you not?—Yes, a few.

176. And I suppose they compete with the Sandon Tramway?—No, they do not. They compete with the Government railway.

177. Do they not cart goods some of which would otherwise go to the Sandon Tramway?—We have an unfortunate circumstance in that a motor-lorry runs from Palmerston to Foxton, competing with the Government line. It takes some very heavy loads, and we as a county objected very strongly indeed, because it is using our roads and not paying anything towards the rates. It was such a serious matter that we stopped the traffic for certain months in the year. That is going on consequently against the Government railway, and not against us. As far as I know, there is not the competition running alongside our tramway that there is against the Government railway.

178. Can you tell us whether motor-lorries are or are not encouraged by the Manawatu County Council?—I should say we do not encourage them. They use the roads and do not pay anything towards the upkeep. We are neither encouraging or discouraging them.

179. How often does your tram run?—It depends entirely on what we are doing. When we are taking gravel we run every day; but I think the tram runs five days a week in normal times.

180. You mean five trips a week?—Yes; once down and once up. It used to be a tri-weekly service, but it has increased considerably.

181. I think you said that any wool from higher up the district would, if the tramway were extended, go through Foxton?—I think it is probable.

182. It would depend upon whether the cost was cheaper one way or the other?—Yes.

183. I suppose a certain quantity of goods would be carried from Wanganui down to Greatford or Feilding for your district, and carted from those stations?—Not a great amount.

184. I am told there is a certain amount of goods traffic coming down that way?—It is possible; there must be some, of course.

185. Then you have a certain amount of outward stuff coming from your district to Feilding and being carried by the Main Trunk line?—I should imagine there must be some, yes.

186. Whatever there is, which is carried in the way I have described would be diverted to your line?—From the line between Feilding and the point of connection on the Government line.

187. You mentioned yesterday the boat named the "Breeze" bringing oats from the South Island to Foxton?—Yes. It is owned by A. H. Turnbull and Co., of Christchurch, who, I understand, are the Canterbury Steamship Company.

188. You do not know what part of Canterbury that particular shipment came from?—No; I think most likely it would be Timaru.

189. Can you give us any idea when that shipment went to Foxton—within the last year or two?—Oh, yes.*

190. Then, even if you had this extension and you were shipping grass-seed, chaff, or any other produce, there would still have to be a certain amount of cartage done, would there not, because all the farmers do not live along the line of tramway?—Yes, they would have to get to the nearest point.

191. Can you give the Commission any indication as to what you think would be the maximum distance that cartage would have to be done by any particular farmer who would be using the tramway?—Possibly four or five miles.

192. And of course coal and firewood would still have to be carted from the tramway?—Yes, but a lesser distance.

193. I suppose you anticipate that the farms in what you call the upper or northern district will gradually improve, and that as time goes on less of your grass-seed will be required up there?—There is always a rotation of crops.

194. I suppose there is a good deal of flat country round this upper or northern district from which you say you draw your ewes, from which lambs could be obtained?—None at all, I should say. There is no country in the Waimarino that is suitable for fattening unless you would be able to grow turnips, but it is very cold and high country.

195. Where are the Taihape works going to draw their supply direct from?—From Taihape itself. You can fatten two-tooth wethers on the grass, and get a certain number of milk-fat lambs from their mothers, according to the season.

196. All you have said assumes the probability of a number of people in your district who are now dairy-farming abandoning dairy-farming and taking up this new fattening business?—Yes, probably. The farmer will do the best he can for himself and that which is most convenient. Dairying is not a very convenient occupation.

197. You have spoken of gravel from the bed of the Rangitikei, which you say will be useful to the Government for railway purposes?—Yes.

198. But does the County Council own any portion of the river-bed?—The Crown owns it, but it has never made any objection to people taking it.

199. Why do you say the Crown owns it?—I suppose all the river-beds belong to the Crown. Up to a certain time the Crown grants were given to the centre of the river. Latterly they have not done so, the grants being only to the edge of the river. There is a road-line at the edge of the river, and a reserve in our hands.

* Witness subsequently wrote, "I find on inquiry that the 'Breeze' now, and has for some years, run to Wanganui instead of Foxton. I have often heard of it bringing oats for Marton and I assumed it came to Foxton, I now find I was mistaken."