

149. The result, therefore, is this: that any farmer who is living along the Sandon tramway route can grow chaff, send it down to Himatangi and away up 150 miles past Marton on better terms than the man sending it in from Marton?—Not altogether, because the Sandon farmer has not specialized the way we have.

150. Is not that so according to your own figures—you have said that there is a difference of 5s. 6d. per ton?—Yes.

151. Well, if it pays a man five miles from Marton to cart his chaff into Marton at 7s. 6d. per ton, cannot you see that he is on worse terms than the man along the Sandon route who is sending his chaff down to Himatangi and then away again 150 miles past Marton?—No; because the cost of cutting in Sandon exceeds the cost in Marton, because they have not specialized in it in Sandon. I do not think they have a machine at all in Sandon. All the farmers have not equal appliances to-day.

152. Do you know anything about motor-wagons?—No. I have had experience with a motor-lorry, and I have seen a wagon in the street.

153. Would not that be perfectly suitable for carting chaff?—It would on a metalled road.

154. Have you not good metalled roads in the Sandon district?—But the trouble is that you have to get from the stacks to the metalled road.

155. But you have got pretty good roads right up to the farm?—But you would want a good road right up to the stack. The weather is so catchy about harvest-time that we must put up a stack in the least possible time.

156. But do you not think it would pay farmers to cart their own chaff from their paddocks to the main road in their own carts and then put it on the motor-wagon?—No, decidedly not. The handling alone would cost as much as the carting.

157. But the farmer would be handling it himself in the first instance?—Yes, he only handles it once. It goes direct on to the cart and on to the truck.

158. You think motor-wagons are not feasible?—Yes.

159. I suppose what you want is a railway, and do not want the motor-wagons to be feasible?—We want the best we can get.

160. I want to know what it is you do want. I understand what you want is a railway from Levin to Marton?—Yes, we think it would be better. We have asked for that for a number of years. As far as I am personally concerned, that is what I want.

161. We have heard that there is very little chaff at present sent away from the Sandon district?—Yes, that is correct.

162. The farmers grow grass-seed and send that away?—Yes.

163. And do very well?—Some do.

164. You do not deal with grass-seed, do you?—Yes.

165. But you have not a dressing-apparatus?—No.

166. So that any grass-seed you buy had to go to Palmerston or Feilding to be dressed?—Yes.

167. Then chaff would suit you better from your personal point of view?—But we handle a lot of grass-seed.

168. Which suits you better, to handle grass-seed or chaff?—We prefer to handle both. One works in with the other. We say that for the railway chaff is a better trade.

169. The bulk of the grass-seed business is done by the Feilding and Palmerston people, is it not?—Yes, the bulk is. As a matter of fact we represent a Palmerston firm and have a traveller.

170. But you do it under Palmerston agents?—Yes.

171. Now, there is a lot of chaff comes through even to Palmerston from the South Island, is there not?—It might be so.

172. But you can tell us whether any South Island chaff comes to Wanganui and thence to Marton and stations north of Marton?—No, I should say there would be none, practically. A good deal goes to Wanganui and stays there.

173. Can you say definitely?—As far as my knowledge is concerned, practically none.

174. Do you know whether any South Island chaff goes southwards from Auckland after having been landed there?—Not with my own knowledge. I know it goes to Auckland, but cannot say whether it goes southward.

175. *The Chairman.*] The trade has been rather abnormal on account of long droughts?—It was last year, but this year it has been normal.

176. *Mr. Myers.*] When you are dealing with chaff do you buy from the farmer and sell on your own account as a rule?—That is the practice. There is no question of agency with us.

177. I think you and Sir James Wilson have for years been the chief agitators for this railway?—Perhaps Sir James Wilson has been, but I do not think I have.

178. You have appeared each time before the parliamentary Committee supporting the agitation, have you not?—Yes, when I resided at Sandon in my official capacity and since.

179. Is the firm of R. Wilson and Co. Sir James Wilson's firm?—No, there is no connection at all. One of his sons is a director.

180. I think you appeared before the Petitions Committee both in 1904 and 1910?—Yes, in Wellington.

181. Saying on each occasion very much the same as you say to-day?—The conditions are different to-day in some respects to what they were then.

182. Do you mean to tell the Commission that in 1904 you thought it would have been justifiable to construct a railway from Levin to Marton?—In 1896 we had a syndicate which was prepared to do it—to connect up the two places, and take over the Council's tramways.