

16. *Mr. Williams.*] In regard to that new material, is it material for renewing the track?—Yes, for renewing the track—putting in 40 lb. rails instead of 28 lb. rails.

17. If you were replacing 28 lb. rails would that figure be included?—I presume so. The charge is not for labour. In a great number of instances the formation of the line has been made up, and in places it has been regraded. That cost has been put against the ordinary maintenance charge, and never charged up as new work at all. It has been considered a fair maintenance charge.

18. Those only include improvements to the line?—Improvements and renewals to the line.

19. *Mr. Hannay.*] If you sell any old 28 lb. rails, what becomes of the proceeds?—We have deducted from Capital Account the amount we have received.

20. *Mr. Skerrett.*] Can you state the prospects of increased freights by the extension of the tram to Marton?—Yes; there would be an increase of freight. As has been stated by a previous witness, the districts are suited for an interchange of traffic. For instance, at the present time there is no firewood coming into the district at all. There are huge quantities of it on the Main Trunk line, and if we had a connection near Marton, allowing it to go on to our line, I think it is fair to assume that a new traffic in firewood would spring up. Firewood is a commodity that costs very little, but the freight on the sixty-one miles at the present time absolutely prohibits it being sent round the sixty-one miles.

21. This is a statement showing that the freight on firewood by the round route is £2 0s. 2d. per truck [statement produced and put in]?—Yes.

22. And the Government and tram freight from Rata, which is a firewood district, would be £1?—Yes; that is if the connection at Marton were made. With the through line it would be 15s. 5d. from Rata to Sanson.

23. Does this evidence also apply to fencing-posts?—Yes.

24. By the round route the freight on a truck of posts from Ohakune is £3 1s. 1d.?—That is right.

25. And via Greatford or Marton to Sanson £2 5s. 7d.?—Yes.

26. And by the through line from Ohakune to Sanson £1 18s. 9d.?—Yes.

27. Will you produce a rough plan showing the stations and distances on the tramway?—[Plan produced and put in.] The distances are marked. It is only a rough plan.

28. You have dealt with fencing-posts and firewood. How about timber?—Timber would come into the district much more readily, and there would be a considerable saving in freight.

29. Is there anything else?—There is the sheep traffic. Sheep would come in via the tram, if the connection were made from Greatford or some point near Marton, to their destination along the tram-line. At the present time they are detained at Greatford or Marton and driven. We have had one or two instances in the last year of farmers railing their stock right round the whole sixty-one miles. Sheep and lambs come into Sanson district for fattening. The reason they have been taken round is to save the sheep from being knocked about, and the sheep do not lose anything by going round by railway.

30. You are referring now to store sheep?—Yes, store sheep going down to be fattened.

31. Have you got a statement showing what part of the product of the dairy factories the line is carrying?—Yes. The dairy companies get practically all their coal in by tram, also their salt and other commodities that are used in the manufacture of butter. During the last three years the Glen Oroua Dairy Factory got coal as follows: In 1913, 307 tons; in 1914, 204 tons; in 1915, 325 tons: making a total of 386 tons.

32. *The Chairman.*] They would have to cart it from your siding—how many miles?—The greatest distance is three miles.

33. *Mr. Myers.*] Where does this coal come from?—The bulk of it comes from the Auckland District—it comes right round. Some of it comes through Foxton and some from Wellington.

34. *Mr. Skerrett.*] Is it carried by train?—Yes, by train; some from Wellington, and some from the Auckland District by train from the Waikato to Himatangi, and then up by our tram. The Rongotea Dairy Company in 1913 got 244 tons, in 1914 120 tons, and in 1915 160 tons. The reason for the smaller amount in the year 1914–15 as compared with previous years was that this particular company put in a suction-gas plant and uses it with the steam. The total quantity of coal they got over the tram was 524 tons.

35. *Mr. Myers.*] Do you make any concession on long-distance coal?—No; we make a fresh charge.

36. *The Chairman.*] How far would the dairy companies be from Palmerston? Would that be the nearest place to them, or Feilding?—The Rongotea Dairy Company, at Campbell, would be about thirteen miles away [explained on map]. We do not deal with the butter traffic on the tram. It goes to the Government line. But in the last year these companies have commenced to make cheese instead of butter, and although the season was only started very late we carried last year 130 tons of cheese.

37. Where did that cheese go to?—It went to Himatangi, and from Himatangi to Wellington. It has been stated that no dairy-produce goes over the tram-line at all, and I am proving that produce from the dairy companies does go over the tram-line. Cheese goes over it, and it will go in larger quantities as the dairy companies get settled. It goes to Wellington by rail via Himatangi. The Rongotea Dairy Company have not gone in for cheese yet. They put out 220 tons in 1913–14, and 216 tons in 1914–15 of butter. [Statement put in—Exhibit 11.] In addition to those items which are shown directly, there are large quantities of manure come in—the quantity is increasing every year—used by the dairy-farmer.

38. Do you get the manure from Auckland?—No, from Wellington via rail to Himatangi.

39. But where does the manure come from—from the South Sea Islands?—A lot of it is Meat Export Company manure, and slag, and superphosphates of all kinds. Large quantities come in, but I could not tell you the tonnage, because it is practically impossible to get at it. The statement shows the quantity of manure hauled by the tram.