

141. Having none in your own district, which makes it necessary for you to import your posts and firewood, the traffic would be negligible?—If you have to pay freight of 100 per cent. on a commodity the people will use something else to take its place.

142. What are they using?—They are using coal.

143. But they must have fencing-posts: what are they using for them?—There have been a few experiments with concrete. A great number of people have been carting their posts from Greatford.

144. And where have they come from?—From Ohakune, chiefly.

145. They have found no difficulty in carting them at the present time, apparently. Can you give any idea of the quantities that have been carted?—No, I could not tell you.

146. Now, in regard to timber: in 1904, according to your estimate, the quantity of timber was 141,000 ft. ?—Yes.

147. Yet in the parliamentary proceedings of 1904 you made a different statement?—I may state that that return which has been handed in was made up to the 31st December, and the present is made up to the 31st March.

148. Do you know that in 1910, for the year ended March, your timber imports were 838,000 ft. ?—Yes.

149. How would that timber come into the district?—It came down the Main Trunk line, round Greatford to Himatangi, and up from Himatangi.

150. I notice that your timber was 838,000 ft. in 1910, and it has gone down in 1914 and 1915 to 360,000 ft. and 252,000 ft. ?—Yes.

151. What justification, then, have you for saying that the timber-importations are likely to increase?—First I will tell you the reason for that big rise and drop. A box-factory was started at Rongotea, and large quantities of timber were taken in for that purpose. Owing to the distance the man who had the box-factory found the freight prohibitive, and he moved the factory from Rongotea to Feilding, and he has his business there at the present time.

152. Does he get the timber down to Feilding?—I do not know what he does there, but I presume he gets his timber from where he got it before. He has mills up the Main Trunk line. The boxes are made at the factory in Feilding, and carted from Feilding to the dairy factories in the form of boxes.

153. I suppose the carts which take the boxes from Feilding take butter back from the factories to Feilding?—No, they come back empty. I have seen them.

154. Have you in your tramway rates a minimum for timber?—Yes, 8d.—the same as they charge on the railway.

155. Are the charges on your line the minimum charges allowed by the Order in Council?—Yes. These charges were all fixed up before I was with the Council and have been made during my time.

156. I suppose you know there is an Order in Council?—Yes, and I think you will find that that freight-list which has been handed in is a copy of the Order in Council.

157. Then, your charges are not the same as the railway charges—the scale is not the same?—In lots of things it is. I think you will find it is exactly the same. There may be a difference in some commodities.

158. Does that scale apply to passenger-fares as well as to freight?—No.

159. Can you give us an estimate of the passenger traffic—it is something like £175 or £200 a year?—No, it is not that now. The passenger traffic since the advent of motor-cars has dropped to practically nothing. It would average, I suppose, about £5 per month. We run a train regularly three days a week for passengers.

160. Mr. McVilly wants to know whether you accept and take the Government classification of goods?—Yes, practically. I can produce the classification, as I have it here.

161. Can you, for instance, tell me what class grass-seed comes in?—It has been charged as Class E—rate and a half.

162. How is the loading and unloading done from your trucks along the line, and by whom?—By the consignor when putting export goods on the truck.

163. And by the consignee on inward goods?—Not in every case. It depends on the class of goods. Ordinary merchandise at certain places is unloaded by our own man. At Rongotea we have a man stationed who does the unloading, while at Sanson and north of Sanson it is done by our own man. Other places are treated as flag stations and it is done by the consignee.

164. How many men do you employ exclusively as gangers?—One ganger and three surfacemen—four men continually employed.

165. How many men have you employed altogether, apart from the ganger and surfacemen, on the tramway?—Four permanent men, including the engine-driver.

166. What class of locomotive do you employ?—We have a 20-ton six-wheeled coupled tank engine, made by Barclay and Sons, of Kilmarnock, imported in 1910, and we have another engine of 14 tons—a six-wheeled coupled tank engine.

167. Can you give us the haulage-capacity of the engines running from Himatangi to Sanson?—The larger engine was guaranteed to take 100 tons up a grade of 1 in 70.

168. And is that your ruling grade?—No; 1 in 75 going to Foxton.

169. What is your ruling grade the other way?—1 in 90 or 1 in 100.

170. What do you say is the usual haulage-capacity for a 1-in-75 grade?—The engine has taken up 120 tons on that grade.

171. That is equivalent to how many trucks?—An average of twelve trucks.

172. You still have six miles or thereabouts of 28 lb. rails?—About five miles.

173. Have you any 52 lb. rails?—Half a mile of 52 lb. rails, and the rest are 40 lb. rails.

174. You say that some 40 lb. rails were new?—Yes.

175. And the others were second-hand?—Yes.