

6. By whom is the loading and unloading done?—The loading is done by the consignor and the unloading by the consignee.

7. At present we know that all timber for the Sandon district that comes down the Main Trunk line gets to Sandon via Himatangi and the tram?—Yes.

8. Would you mind comparing the existing freight tariff with the freight that would be payable if the tram were extended so as to junction with Marton first?—Well, the railage from Ohakune to Himatangi is 3s. 6d. per 100 ft., a distance of 132 miles, and from Ohakune to Greatford—assuming that Greatford is the point where it would junction with the main line—is eighty-nine miles and the freight is 3s. 1d. per 100 ft. Assuming that the junction was made there the saving on timber to the consumer would be 5d. per 100 ft. I assume an equal freight on the tram both ways.

9. And it would save the Department the haulage on forty-three or forty-four miles?—Yes, it would save the Department hauling it from Greatford to Himatangi.

10. Can you help the Commission by saying anything about the delays on the Marton—Palmerston North line in the case of timber, through shunting, &c.?—Well, I should say there were delays on that section. In the first place the timber comes down the Main Trunk line to Marton, and it has to be shunted, and the trains remarshalled up at Marton, whereas they could just as easily be shunted off at Marton on to the new tram-siding, if the tram was extended, and be done with as far as the Railway Department is concerned. The trains have to be remarshalled again at Marton for the timber going south, and in any case I should say they would have to be remarshalled again at Palmerston. I do not know about Longburn.

11. *The Chairman.*] You say that 5d. per 100 ft. would not cover it?—No, it would not cover the remarshalling of the trains and haulage round to Himatangi.

12. *Mr. Skerrett.*] There must be a place between Marton and Palmerston where, in order to conserve the express traffic, the timber-trains have to be put on a sidetrack?—Yes, I should imagine so. At Halcombe there are several tracks for shunting trains.

13. Would you compare the freights with the through Government connection from Marton to Levin?—In the first place I will compare it in regard to timber for the Manawatu—that is, in the Sandon and Rongotea district. At present timber railed to Himatangi is 3s. 6d. per 100 ft., and there is also a rate on the tram which I average at 1s. per 100 ft., which means that the cost to the consumer would be 4s. 6d. per 100 ft. Assuming that the through line was made from Marton or Greatford to Levin, and the through rate applied on the timber which was sent into that district, the distance would approximately be 100 miles and the freight 3s. 2d. per 100 ft. The saving would be 1s. 4d. per 100 ft. to the consumer. That saving is equivalent to 16 or 17 per cent. on the on-truck price of the timber. I might state that for the purpose of this estimate I have assumed that twelve miles from Greatford Station would take the railway into the heart of the Manawatu district.

14. What would that saving be per 100 ft.?—It would save 1s. 4d. per 100 ft.

15. At present the freight on timber from Ohakune to Wellington is what?—3s. 10d. per 100 ft.

16. And the saving on seventeen miles would mean a reduction in freight of how much?—Twopence.

17. That would be a saving of 2 per cent. on the truck value of the timber, would it not?—Yes.

18. You are able to tell the Commission about the markets for the Main Trunk timber, and particularly furnish some information about the Wellington market for the timber?—In what way do you mean?

19. Where do the Main Trunk mills find the market for their timber now?—They find it in practically all portions of the North Island, from Auckland to New Plymouth, and Napier, and in some measure in Wellington. In the Wellington market the Main Trunk sawmillers have not played an important part for many years, except in so far as what I may call the better grade of timbers—that is, heart of totara, heart of matai, and heart of rimu. The timber for which the Main Trunk sawmillers require the widest market is O.B. timber—that is the low-priced timber on the Wellington market, and they have been unable to compete in the past mainly owing to the high cost of railway freight. The result is that the higher railage freight enables South Island or sea-borne timber to come into Wellington. If the deviation were made and any reduction in the freight brought about, or anything that assisted the Main Trunk sawmillers to put their timber on to the Wellington market cheaper, it would be of considerable value to them.

20. *Mr. Hannay.*] Would 2d. per 100 ft. make a difference in the purchases?—Yes, if you could make a saving of 2d. on your purchases you would consider doing so.

21. *The Chairman.*] What do you sell O.B. timber at?—At Ohakune, 8s. 3d. less 2½ per cent. for cash—say, 8s. net.*

22. Freight extra?—Yes.

23. *Mr. Skerrett.*] Will you look at the Harbour Board and railway returns, and indicate what the import of timber amounts to?—The total importation of timber into Wellington last year was 11,862,732 ft.—in round figures, 12,000,000 ft.—that is, sea-borne into Wellington. Of that about 800,000 ft. consisted of Oregon pine, 400,000 ft. from foreign ports, 4,000,000 ft. from Australian ports—that would be Australian hardwood—and from the coastal ports of New Zealand 6,600,000 ft. This latter would consist probably of what is termed O.B. timber, and that timber the Main Trunk line is unable to compete with.

24. *The Chairman.*] What would your mill turn out?—Our mills are considered to be a good average size in the district, and we would turn out about 8,000 ft. or 9,000 ft. per day. We mill at each of our mills 2,000,000 ft. per year.

* See answer to Question 74 and footnote.