

19. Why can they not compete with the railways going down to Foxton?—The road is not quite so good. They only compete with them, so far as I can understand, because the goods are more easily handled; but it seems a strange thing that the railway should reject custom.

20. I suppose the Marton people are acting quite rightly if motor-lorries are cheaper than the railways?—The Wanganui route is a bad road, no doubt, but it is shorter to Wanganui by six or seven miles than to Foxton. The Wanganui road is pretty steep in some parts.

21. *Mr. Luckie.*] I understand some firms at Marton get their drapery direct from Wellington?—Yes, by rail. It costs about £3 per ton; but most of them get it via Wanganui in the same way as the benzine and kerosene come.

22. Would there be a material reduction in the freight charge if the line were diverted?—I am told so, to the extent of about 5s. per ton.

23. A considerable quantity of artificial manures go to Marton?—Yes; several thousand pounds' worth go by rail from Wellington, and the shortening of the route would mean 9d. per ton, or a saving of about £150 to the consumer.

24. Would that affect the carriage of cattle in the same way?—Yes, in the same way.

25. I think you were stuck up last night?—Yes, I was stuck up by one of those wretched crossing sidings.

26. You explained to me that you saw an instance of the extreme traffic that takes place in stock-trains—you saw one that was 250 yards in length?—Yes; they frequently pass my house of that length.

27. The bulk of the stuff going where?—To Wellington.

28. About how many through trains go through Marton on this section every day?—About sixteen or eighteen.

29. And how many trains are there of which Marton is the terminal station?—Sixteen.

30. Of which how many pass through this section?—I think, four.

31. Does that include special trains of any kind?—No.

32. Is the number increasing?—Yes, I think so, within the last two or three years. I might say that a stock-train that passed my house the other day contained forty trucks of cattle. That is not an infrequent thing at all. If it passed through Palmerston one cannot wonder why trains are stuck up in the Square. So far as Marton is concerned the Municipal Corporation imports from 1,200 to 1,500 tons of coal per year, and we should be very glad to get that through Foxton, because it is stuck up very much in Wanganui. It is put on to us by the railway by the way of demurrage unless we can cart 150 tons per day, which is quite impossible for all the cartage in Marton. The coal goes to Wanganui, and then by rail from Wanganui to Marton Junction.

33. You would get it much cheaper if it went by rail to Foxton?—Yes, much.

34. *Mr. Williams.*] By the present rail?—No; we get nothing through Foxton by rail. There is one point with regard to Marton and Foxton. Foxton is a place of about fifteen hundred inhabitants and Marton about two thousand. Frequently we want to transact business in Marton, and we have either to hire a motor-car at considerable cost or go round by way of Palmerston, nearly sixty miles, to do what would otherwise be a journey of twenty miles, and then we have only one hour to transact business in Foxton, and it is impossible to get back the same day.

35. *Mr. Hannay.*] Are you correct? Supposing the Government railway were from Foxton to Marton—that is about the same distance as Wanganui to Marton—what advantage would you have in the matter of freight?—In this way, that the shipping freight is not quite so much by 1s. or 2s. per ton to Foxton, and there are wharfage rates. I do not suggest for one moment that Foxton can all round compete with Wanganui: I think that is quite impossible.

36. I think you would find that the freights are about the same—the distance is about the same?—I have not had practical experience of the cost. We have not had any coal through Foxton, but that is my information.

37. *Mr. Myers.*] Do you by any chance ever travel as a passenger by the Sandon Tramway?—Never.

38. You know it?—I know portion of the tramway.

39. You are not anxious to travel as a passenger?—I do not know. I would if the necessity arose.

40. But it is not a very fast express?—I have not the least idea.

41. Supposing that tramway were extended to Marton it would not encourage a large passenger traffic from Marton to Foxton?—Well, I should think so.

42. What you want is the connection by railway?—Yes. We want cheaper merchandise too, and if we got the tram-line from Foxton to Marton we will be very thankful indeed.

43. But as Mr. Hannay put it to you, supposing the freights to Wanganui and Foxton are the same, where are you going to derive your advantage in Marton?—We would derive no advantage. I do not see how we could—the thing speaks for itself.

44. I suppose there is a good deal of motor-lorry traffic between Wanganui and Marton?—Yes. The lorries run three or four times a day, and carry about 2 or 3 tons.

45. And do they carry anything back?—Yes, parcels and goods and exchange goods; but there is very little that goes out of Marton. I suppose there are quite 20 to 30 tons per week going from Wanganui to Marton by motor-lorry.

46. Would you say what is the distance by road from Wanganui to Marton?—About twenty-six miles, and thirty-three by rail.

47. How long does it take motor-lorries to do that twenty-six miles fully laden?—About two hours.