

31. Does it not appear to you to be rather incongruous that if the tram has been in existence for thirty years and that if the settlers choose to pay the cost of extending it to Marton that they should not be permitted to have the connection with the Government railway-line? Can you conceive any objection from a public point of view why the connection should not be made?—Yes, for this reason: that if it ended at the connection with the Government line, well and good; but to my mind it would not end there. It is simply the thin end of the wedge: they have a more ambitious scheme.

32. What do you suggest is the more ambitious scheme?—For the Main Trunk line to be diverted from Marton to Levin.

33. You have no intrinsic objection from a public point of view to the connection at Marton, but you are afraid it will be like a voice crying in the wilderness?—No, if it ended at the connection the matter would rest with the Rangitikei people, but I say it will not end there.

34. *Mr. Williams.*] Do you mean the agitation will not end there or that the tram-line will not end there?—If they got the connection with the tram-line the next agitation would be to put a heavier line down and run the railway over it.

35. *Mr. Skerrett.*] Do you not know that it is the settled practice of farmers wherever possible to rail their fat sheep and fat cattle to the slaughterhouses?—As far as fat lambs are concerned it is the case, because the lambs waste very quickly, but not so as regards wethers and beef.

36. We have had evidence from a number of farmers, who have all asserted that it is the general practice that wherever possible fat stock should not be driven, but railed to the freezing-works?—I do not agree with that if it is over a short distance.

37. Do you not know also that it is the policy of farmers wherever possible to bring their stores by rail where they have to travel an appreciable distance?—If they have to travel long distances they would bring them by rail.

38. Say, a hundred miles?—Yes, possibly, but anything less than that I think they would be driven. It would depend upon circumstances.

39. Is it not a fact that where a farmer goes and buys stores he puts them on the nearest railway-station, and sends them down by truck and not by road?—It does not always apply.

40. *Mr. Luckie.*] Is this statement correct: "Total number of bales of wool trucked from Palmerston North, Feilding, Marton, Hunterville, Taihape, Woodville, Dannevirke, and Pahiatua railway-stations for year ending 31st March, 1915, 57,197 bales; shipped via Foxton same period, 7,942 bales; forwarded per rail to Wellington, 49,255 bales"?—Yes. I cannot say where they came from. It shows that that number of bales were trucked to Wellington. They would not go to anywhere else than Wellington.

41. The bulk of that 7,942 bales would come from where?—I should estimate that that shows that about 13½ per cent. of the total wool trucked from those stations went to Foxton, but we would have to take into consideration the wool produced in the immediate vicinity of Foxton. I should say 10 per cent. of the wool produced from the stations mentioned went via Foxton, and 90 per cent. went by rail to Wellington.

ARTHUR EDWARD PEARCE SWORN and examined. (No. 38.)

1. *Mr. Innes.*] You are a farmer in the Kiwitea district and Chairman of the Kiwitea County Council?—Yes.

2. You were at one time a resident of the Sandon district?—Yes, I lived in the Sandon district for about twenty years. Kiwitea lies between Rangitikei and Oroua Rivers, and includes the towns of Kimbolton and Rangiwhia. My parents lived in the Sandon district, and I lived there until I was twenty-four years of age.

3. It is said the farmers in that district usually burn their straw and chaff?—Well, during the time I lived there the farmers did not stack the straw chaff. It was usually shot out of the elevator and allowed to rot or was burned. It was not considered to be of any value, as there was no market for it.

4. Is there a market for it now?—I believe there is a market in certain seasons, when other chaff is very scarce. I have known them cut up the old straw when it has been in a sufficiently good condition to turn into chaff.

5. Did the burning take place in other districts beside Sandon?—I could not say. I know that around Halcombe they used to burn the straw.

6. *The Chairman.*] What part of the Kiwitea County do you live in?—Waituna West.

7. *Mr. Innes.*] You are here to represent your county?—Yes.

8. *The Chairman.*] How far up from Feilding would the good land go?—There is good land through Feilding right up to the Kaiwaitau Block, nearly opposite Mangaweka. That is nearly thirty miles.

9. *Mr. Innes.*] The whole of your county is unserved by any railway?—Yes, there are none. The nearest point to the railway at this end is about eight miles—that is, at Cheltenham.

10. *The Chairman.*] There is a road to Mangaweka?—Yes, leading from the Kiwitea County.

11. *Mr. Innes.*] You desire to put before the Commission, on behalf of your county, your views as to this proposed railway-line from Levin to Marton?—Yes. The chief reason that we object to the deviation being made is that the district which I represent is already a long way from any railway, and it is a fairly closely populated district. The land has all been cleared of bush, and is settled right throughout. All the traffic and produce of that district has to be carted in some instances for a distance of over thirty miles. We regard Feilding as our chief centre. The population migrate towards Feilding, and all the produce practically from that large area is brought into the Feilding Station. We hold that if the deviation is made it will