

88. *Mr. Lang.*] Do I understand that there had been a block on account of the traffic?—I know trains have been delayed there—I really cannot say from what cause—and they have had to unload, and I was given to understand that it was because of a block in the traffic?—It may have been at some particular time, such as race or show time.

89. If this line was made as you suggest, it would be fifteen miles less, and of course a saving in the time when the main line is constructed right through the Island, and the probability is that all the important traffic would go through that way?—Yes; such as stock and things like that.

90. It would be the shortest and quickest line?—Yes.

91. But probably the people in Palmerston would object to this line?—I do not think so. I do nearly all my business with Palmerston. There was one of the newspapers in Palmerston suggested they should watch that line and what we were doing because it might divert the traffic. I replied by letter in the same paper that the people in Palmerston would rather have money spent on some railway or profitable work in their own neighbourhood, amongst their own clients and customers, than in another place. I pointed out, too, that at present our traffic does not go through Palmerston; our fat stock are driven to Longburn or Greatford, and our butter is carted to Longburn, our wool being shipped to Foxton. It does not go to Palmerston at all, and as for any traffic that would pass through, it could not be of any benefit to Palmerston to haul it through their station, or even in the case of passengers it cannot be of any benefit to Palmerston. A number of business people in Palmerston met me afterwards and spoke to me on the subject, and said they could not understand such parochial ideas, and that whatever would benefit us would benefit them. Our hospital and sale-yards, and other institutions are there. We have always supported Palmerston, and will continue to support Palmerston, and I do not think the majority of business people in Palmerston will raise the slightest objection. They recognise that it is for their benefit as well as ours, and they recognise that we are the back country of Palmerston.

92. *The Chairman.*] Is Foxton a “grading port” for dairy-produce?—No; there was some talk about getting a grading-station.

93. You say the timber has all been cut in the Manawatu County. You would have to import coal, and you would import it by Foxton?—Yes.

94. And the line would not help you?—Yes, for firewood, and probably they would get firewood from Taihape if the line was there.

95. Of course your county and the Manawatu County get their subsidies?—Yes; but I would point out that in the early days Road Boards got £2 for £1 subsidy. Just at the time the subsidies were reduced—in fact, to take the place of that—John Ballance brought in the arrangement that in lieu of the subsidies they should have a portion of the land revenue. The Government had sold all the land in Manawatu County at that time, so we never came under the large subsidies of the early days nor the land revenue of the later days. I should say, in regard to the tramway, that the section down as far as Rongotea has been renewed by 40 lb. steel rails. From there down it is 28 lb. old steel rails. The Council does not wish to lay that with 40 lb. rails if the Government is likely to take it over at a short time. We would like the line authorised right through, and some arrangement made about the tram in regard to taking it over when the Government feels disposed to do so.

96. *Mr. Wood.*] You want the Government to take over the tramway?—Yes.

97. The whole line?—Yes, and make a through line of it. There is no necessity to hurry that; the tram is paying very well. We are not anxious about that if we knew about the position in regard to relaying the eight miles.

98. *The Chairman.*] The tram pays more than working-expenses?—It does and it does not. It pays more than working-expenses if you charge only working-expenses against it, but they have been spending a little more on renewing the line out of revenue.

99. *Mr. Vile.*] You stated just now that instead of a duplicate line this line would save the necessity of the duplicate line to Palmerston North?—I do not know that it would save the necessity of it. The traffic might still cram, but it would certainly relieve it.

100. *Mr. Wood* suggested that it would necessarily have to be duplicated at Levin?—Part of it would go by the Rimutaka line.

101. When you got to Palmerston North the goods can go the other way?—They do go now—some of them.

102. *Mr. Wood.*] What, fat stock?—I do not know about fat stock, but manure does. The goods I get from Wellington come by the Rimutaka and round by Himatangi.

103. But going from Palmerston?—I think oats and the like of that will go by the Rimutaka.

104. *Mr. Vile.*] You mentioned about 450 tons of butter at Rongotea?—Yes.

105. Do you know there is a factory at Bull's?—Yes; it is a new factory lately started, and last year its output was 60 tons.

106. Do you know the country well between the Rangitikei River and Sandon?—Yes.

107. Do you know that is perhaps one of the best grain-growing districts in the colony?—Yes; round about Sandon it is remarkably good.

108. How many thousand acres do you think is adapted for grain-growing purposes?—I should say—it would be a guess—there must be forty or fifty thousand. I should think at least 50,000 acres round about Sandon of good grain-growing land.

109. Do you think it is the best in the North Island?—Yes.

110. You know, of course, that there are enormous quantities of grain sent down the Sanson tramway every year going out of the district?—I do not know what the quantity is, but there is a considerable quantity.

111. If the line was constructed right through to Levin, a great deal of stuff would go direct?—Yes. There is one point I omitted to state, and that is, that we lose a great deal of the by-produce