

of our farms simply for the want of this connection, such as eggs, and straw, &c., and if we had the direct line from Rongotea it would obviate that; but we have three charges, the tram charges, the Government charges, and the company's charges, and it prevents that stuff going altogether.

112. *The Chairman.*] You could not tell the Committee what the county are likely to ask for their tramway—what they value it at?—I could not say. When framing the petition we ascertained from the Manawatu County Council what they would do about it, and the petition states that the Council are prepared to sell their interest to the Government on such terms as may be agreed upon by the contracting parties. I do not know what they ask for it, but it is a matter of arrangement. For my part as a ratepayer, I should be inclined to deal liberally if it were made part of the contract to have the line put through.

113. *Mr. Wood.*] You would like the Government to relieve the county of the tramway?—The tram is paying all right now, but we should be very glad to get something off it; it would help us to make our roads and at the same time save our roads by taking the traffic off them.

FRED PURNELL recalled. (No. 4.)

114. *The Chairman.*] Can you tell the Committee what the county are likely to ask for the tramway?—The position is that the tramway cost £25,000; the ratepayers are paying interest on £15,000 loans for tramway, and probably some such amount would be the basis; but, as I explained, the Council has instructed me to say that they are not anxious to sell the tramway because the settlers appreciate the advantages that the trams have, and that they would not have if the tram was made the main line of railway; but no doubt to the general interest of the district it would be an advantage to sell.

115. You are paying interest on £15,000?—Yes, approximately.

116. *Mr. Wood.*] That is the Foxton Borough, I presume?—No, the Manawatu County. The Foxton Borough was originally included in the Manawatu County, but eventually there was a severance. The Foxton Borough are paying a very small proportion of the loan—they pay about £15 a year—that is, the interest on the whole of their liability, £367.

117. *The Chairman.*] Is that the whole of the original loan?—It is a portion of the original loan.

118. What was the amount of the original loan?—Apparently it is not known, as our records were destroyed by fire. A certain amount was borrowed, but was not sufficient to pay the cost of tramway-construction. The rest of the money was advanced by the Government, and deducted from subsidies on general rates. For years the Manawatu County Council had no subsidy whatever.

119. *Mr. Wood.*] Do I understand that they will sell the whole of that line to Carnarvon for £15,000?—The position is this: the ratepayers are paying interest on not more than that sum of money. I am not authorised to say they would sell for £15,000, but I believe the ratepayers would be willing to hand it over for some such sum as that.

120. *The Chairman.*] What is the length?—Between seventeen and eighteen miles. Approximately, £25,000 was the original cost.

121. You have no authority for saying they would sell at that price?—No, otherwise than that I have listened to general discussions on this question.

122. You said just now that for four years the Manawatu County had had no subsidy?—The position is this: that the original amount borrowed—the exact sum I am unable to say—was not sufficient to complete the tramway, and I believe the Act under which they were borrowing money was repealed. I believe it was the Roads and Bridges Construction Act, and they had to get money from somewhere to complete this line. The Government was good enough to advance this money, which was repaid back out of the subsidies due for three or four years.

123. They had the subsidies?—They practically had the subsidies which were credited against the advance.

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