

Mr. Myers: I would make this suggestion with regard to the statistical information: the Railway Department has no desire to keep back any information. It desires to place all the possible information it has or can obtain before the Commission, and probably the best course would be—if it meets with the concurrence of my learned friends and the Commission—that Mr. McVilly should be called at the outset to give any statistical information he has without being examined on any controversial matters, because that ought to come later.

Mr. Skerrett: I see no objection to that, but what I would like to know from Mr. McVilly is what he can do for us with regard to the information which I think is of importance dealing with sectional accounts.

The Chairman: I apprehend the land between the present line and the east coast is mainly used for pastoral purposes, grazing, &c., and it may be you will have to find out what is the possible or probable produce of the district.

Mr. Luckie: Evidence will be supplied as to that, and a large plan is being compiled showing the holdings.

Mr. Myers: The adoption of my suggestion would mean that at the outset Mr. McVilly would give any information he has available, and he would be questioned solely on statistical matters, and if it were found that any further information was necessary on statistical matters he could communicate with other Departments.

Mr. Skerrett: Could not Mr. McVilly give any information now as to what part would be useful to the Commission?

Mr. Myers: We will give it. We will give all the information we have in our possession, and all we have been able to obtain.

Mr. Skerrett: I say Mr. McVilly should tell us what information it is at all likely he can give.

The Chairman: It is likely we may draw up before we commence what we think is the necessary information should be given. I think we should have information of the goods carried on the railway, and they do their best to give us the information. They could give us the information of the goods received—flax is the main thing—and whether the cattle are trucked, and for how many miles they truck cattle.

Mr. Weston: On this question of statistical information a letter was written on behalf of the Foxton Harbour Board. [Letter handed in.] I should like some definite statement as to what attitude the Railway Department should take up. In reply to the letter a book was forwarded to me.

The Chairman: That information ought to be given.

Mr. Myers: If necessary Mr. McVilly may be called at the opening meeting of the Commission to give the statistical information. If that information is given it probably will suit you, but it will be understood that Mr. McVilly is not to be cross-examined on other matters. Your Honour will understand that considerable difficulty has been created by the fact that ever since the early days Railway accounts have not been kept of sectional parts at all, and it is extremely difficult to give some of the information asked for.

The Chairman: You must try and get the information, otherwise it will be very difficult to deal with the matter. We may have to make a shot at it, and that may not be satisfactory to any of the parties.

Mr. Skerrett: There seems to be a peculiar reticence about the matter. Mr. McVilly is here.

The Chairman: Are you trying to get the sectional information, Mr. McVilly?

Mr. McVilly: We are trying to get all the information we can for the use of the Commission, and that is one of the items which I will endeavour to produce information on.

Mr. Skerrett: You are endeavouring to work out the sectional information?

Mr. McVilly: Yes.

On the suggestion of counsel the Commission decided to sit in Foxton on Friday, Saturday, and Monday, the 19th, 20th, and 22nd May, and to commence the Palmerston North sitting on Tuesday, the 23rd May.

FOXTON, FRIDAY, 19TH MAY, 1916

At the opening the Chairman read the Commission.

The branch of the inquiry relating to the purchase of the Foxton Wharf was opened.

Mr. M. Myers appeared for the Railway Department; Mr. Weston, with Mr. Luckie, appeared for the Foxton Harbour Board; Mr. Innes appeared for the Palmerston North and Feilding Borough Councils, the Palmerston North and Feilding Chambers of Commerce, and the Kairanga, Pohangina, Oroua, and KIWITEA County Councils.

[P.W.D. Plan No. 22965 put in by Mr. Weston.]

RICHARD WILLIAM McVILLY sworn and examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—Assistant General Manager of the New Zealand Railways.

2. How long have you been in the Railway Department?—Thirty-six years and a half.

3. Do you know at what date the first expenditure was made by the Railway Department at Foxton?—Prior to 1873, by the Public Works Department, which then controlled the building of the railways for the Government. Probably it was in 1872.