

*The Chairman:* I suppose your strongest point is that if the harbour is not improved it will be unable to be kept at a sufficient depth, and they will not get any profit at all?

*Mr. Weston:* That is so. I understand the Railway Department say with regard to dual control that there would be a difficulty, and that if we took over the control and management of the wharf there would have to be a double tally. That is avoided in Patea and Wanganui, and also in the case of the Railway Wharf at Wellington. There the wharfages are collected by the Railway Department and a small amount charged for collecting. That could be done here and trouble would not arise. It may be said to us that we ought never to have lost control of the harbour. Well, it is true we lost it in 1876, but we had no wharfages then, and it is hard that people who may have been young then and with no power in those days should be deprived of that control now. Then, with regard to improvements, if this £1,500 per annum is to go steadily into the hands of the Railway people we cannot hope to improve the harbour. Give us the wharves and we can start.

*The Chairman:* You say that if you do improve it you are giving them greater revenue?

*Mr. Weston:* Yes, a much greater revenue.

*Mr. Myers:* Why not make a rating district if they want to make a harbour?

*Mr. Weston:* How can you trust a Department that is acting as the Department is acting now? If we went and spent £50,000 we might have a Napoleonic Railway Manager coming to us and saying that the wharfages hereafter shall be 4s., and he might get a Commission to support it.

*The Chairman:* That will only take place if the modern Napoleon wins the war.

*Mr. Weston:* We might get a Government Department to put it on; and, remember, the Foxton community is a shrewd community. If you went to the Foxton ratepayers and said, "I want you to put your hands into your pockets to improve that river and the wharves which are now worth to the Railway Department the sum of £54,000," when they originally cost £3,000, do you think you would get it? Moreover, sir, even supposing we did and started to improve the harbour we could never get the wharf. This harbour will never stand two wharves, and there must be only one master. Mr. Millar told us distinctly in the House that if we built a wharf we would get no facilities with regard to sidings, so that unless we get control of this wharf where are we to be? Then there is this further point that appears quite clear from the Department's figures: that if you allow 3½ per cent.—which apparently is the rate of interest that the Government Departments charge themselves—if you debit the original cost of construction, say, £3,000, with that 3½ per cent., you will find that the net profits since 1908 have more than repaid the original cost to the Department, so that as far as capital is concerned these wharves cost the Department nothing. I will now call Mr. Howarth.

CHARLES HENRY HOWARTH sworn and examined. (No. 3.)

1. *Mr. Weston.*] You are Engineer to the Wanganui Harbour Board?—Yes.
2. How long have you been Engineer to the Board?—Eight years.
3. Have you made a special study of harbours such as the Manawatu River harbour and the Wanganui River harbour?—Yes.
4. Have you had an opportunity of inspecting similar harbours in Europe and England?—Yes. There are no two river harbours alike.
5. What harbour-works have you inspected?—I visited many harbours on my trip, such as the Tyne, Clyde, and others.
6. Have you visited any Dutch and Belgian harbours?—Yes, the Zeebrugge and Ostend.
7. Taking the Wanganui and Manawatu river harbours, how do they compare?—Apparently they are very similar. In connection with the Wanganui Harbour we have all the engineering data, but there does not appear to be any connected with this river. They appear to be very similar from a superficial survey. The Harbourmaster tells me that the seas are much lighter than at Wanganui.
8. You have inspected the river here and made a report?—Yes. [Copy report put in—Exhibit B.]
9. You also inspected the wharf, did you not?—Yes, and made a valuation of it. My valuation of the wharf is £3,300.
10. Do you in your report advocate the use of a suction dredge?—Yes.
11. With regard to the channel between here and the Heads, is there much difficulty about improving that?—No, very little difficulty.
12. Are there many shoals that would require dredging?—Three shoals. About 60 chains of the seven miles would require dredging.
13. With regard to the other portions of the river, what depth did you get?—It varies from 14 ft. to 27 ft.
14. You took soundings with the Harbourmaster?—Only for the shoals. When we got beyond a certain depth we did not bother about the deep water.
15. With regard to the bar itself, do you think an improvement can be made there by the use of a suction dredge without retaining-walls?—Yes.
16. *The Chairman.*] Where would you put the spoil?—It would be dumped at sea.
17. *Mr. Weston.*] What would you do with the spoil from dredging the shoals inside?—It would be put ashore through a shore delivery-pipe.
18. With regard to the bar channel you say in your report, "The bar channel is a different matter, for, owing to the want of training-walls, it is entirely governed by the weather, and no doubt periodical dredging will be required; but experience proves that a good channel once dredged remains good for a considerable period"—Yes.