

the wharf in the hands of the Railway Department, do you think that would suit?—Of course, what we would like to see done is that the river is cleared for navigation. We do not know whether that revenue would bring in sufficient.

34. But do you not see that the revenue which would be needed would be more than the net revenue which is now earned by the Railway Department?—Yes, that would be so.

35. Then do you not think it would be better to have some such arrangement as that than that the wharf should be taken over by the Harbour Board and that you run the risk of increased wharfages and of further charges quite properly made by the Railway Department?—Of course, if we knew that the amount produced would do what we require—that is, to clear the river—possibly it would be better for us; but speaking from a shipowners' point of view, it does not matter much to us whether the Harbour Board or the Railway Department does the work so long as it is done.

36. You are content that the Harbour Board should do the work and that you should run whatever risk there is of increased wharfages and charges consequent upon the work being done?—If the Railways would guarantee to see that the work was done from that particular revenue we would agree.

37. You recognize, do you not, that in order to get any real improvement up there there must be an improvement at the bar as well as in the river?—Yes.

38. In order to have any improved conditions for your ships considerable expenditure must be incurred at the bar as well as in the channel?—The bar depends on weather conditions. During a westerly with neap tides we get a good deal of water.

39. Do you suggest that work should be done at the bar?—A certain amount of work should be done, but it is more important, I think, that work should be done in the river.

40. *Mr. Weston.*] With regard to increased dues, supposing the harbour were improved, would you be able to work the vessels more economically when trading there?—If we got better shed accommodation and the harbour improved we would, because we are now losing time there.

41. You could work it quicker, carry larger loads, and at a less freight?—Some years ago we used to be able to take a load up and bring a load down in a day, but we cannot do that now.

42. My friend Mr. Myers asked you to trust the Railway Department. What has been your experience of the Railway Department with regard to the goods-shed there?—I made application to Mr. Stringleman, who was District Manager of the New Zealand Railways at Wanganui, and asked him if they could do anything in the matter of enlarging the shed. That is fifteen years ago, and I have got no satisfaction.

43. You have been pressing it ever since?—Mr. Kellow has also written to the Department, I think.

44. Have you seen the working of that shed up there?—I have.

45. What is your opinion of it as regards the loading of ships?—It is absolutely too small altogether. A full load of the "Queen of the South" more than fills the shed.

46. Then you have simply to discharge into trucks, and those trucks have to be put into the shed when it is cleared?—Yes.

47. *Mr. Myers.*] Do you think the wharf would be of very much use to the Harbour Board without the shed accommodation?—It would be no use without shed accommodation, no, certainly not, unless the Railway received the whole of the cargo into trucks.

48. Do you think the Harbour Board should have a shed of its own?—We must have a shed. The railway-shed is not big enough.

49. There is no room for the Harbour Board to erect a shed there?—No.

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ROBERT EDWARDS sworn and examined. (No. 44.)

1. *Mr. Myers.*] You are a civil engineer?—Yes.

2. You have also been Mayor of Palmerston North, where you still reside?—Yes.

3. I understand that you are in favour of a harbour at Foxton?—Yes.

4. Under any conditions?—No.

5. What do you mean?—The experience of the people of New Zealand has been that as a rule it is ruinous to have a harbour. I am speaking of other harbours, and not Wellington.

6. *The Chairman.*] You mean it is ruinous not to have a harbour and to make one?—Or to attempt to make one. In some parts the security of the properties has almost disappeared on account of the rates.

7. *Mr. Myers.*] I think you have a very intimate knowledge of the Manawatu River?—Yes.

8. That knowledge extends over what period, roughly?—Nearly forty years, off and on.

9. And I think you have studied it particularly?—Yes.

10. You have, I understand, at times lived for a month on end near the mouth of the river watching its conditions?—Yes, in taking a holiday I have frequently lived there for a month, and necessarily was very much interested in what was going on.

11. First of all, we have been told that the channel is a shifting channel at the bar?—That is true.

12. It shifts considerably?—Yes, judging by what the old pilots have told me, and what I have seen and noticed from Government plans where surveys have been made. I reckon it has shifted about a mile and a quarter and possibly a little more in a southerly direction. It was a mile and a quarter farther north years ago. It is inclined to go north again, from my last observation.