

93. *The Chairman.*] If you have to carry goods from Marton to Wellington it costs you a certain amount. If you have a line shortened by fifteen miles you will make a saving of 6s. 2d. per mile?—Provided you could reduce your train services elsewhere.

94. Mr. Skerrett says that in your account you have not allowed anything for the saving of haulage over the fifteen miles for expresses and two goods-trains?—Yes, I have allowed for that.

95. *Mr. Skerrett.*] I understand that cost per train-mile is about 6s. 2d.?—Yes.

96. And the profit is 2s. 6d. above that?—Yes.

97. Could you give to the members of the Commission a statement of the number of train-miles which would be saved on the present running over the fifteen miles?—There will be no saving in train-mileage, of course.

98. I will come to that directly?—About 30,000 miles a year.

99. That is what you have allowed for four expresses and two goods-trains?—Yes.

100. Then the cost of running those 30,000 miles would be annually about £10,000?—Yes, that is right.

101. You have left out of consideration some items which cannot be brought into a pound shillings and pence statement of the position. First of all, there will be a saving to the public in fares over the fifteen miles?—Yes, that is so.

102. There would be a saving also to the public in the time occupied in the journey?—But the time-saving will be very small.

103. Then you charge between 80,000 and 116,000 additional mileage which would be required to be run between Marton and Levin in order to meet the express-trains?—Yes.

104. I assume that you have had prepared, yourself or by some competent officer, a timetable suitable to make the necessary connection?—Calculated on what would be done. Our estimate is a minimum estimate.

105. There is a wide margin—it runs from 80,000 to 116,000 miles?—The estimate 80,000 miles is the absolute minimum, and the 116,000 miles is dependent on connections. For instance, if we have to run extra trains between Wellington and Palmerston, which is quite likely as the result of this connection, then you get that additional mileage. But I have assumed it at 80,000 miles, which is the minimum.

106. But in respect of that 80,000 train-miles you will charge fares and freights, of course?—Yes, but that 80,000 train-miles will be run to deal with less business than the ordinary trains could carry.

107. That may be so, but in the account you have prepared showing the disadvantages of the proposed new line you have charged it with the loss of passengers and freights, and you are charging it now with the whole cost of running the 80,000 additional miles?—I have a perfect right to charge it. If the trains have to run, and they are deprived of the earnings they now get, I have a perfect right to do so.

108. You think it fair to debit this account with 80,000 miles at 6s. 2d.?—No, at 6s.

109. On the assumption that those trains run absolutely empty?—No, I am not doing anything of the kind. They will be run with lesser loads than can be taken.

110. But you have charged it at 6s. 2d. per mile, which is the average cost of running a train-mile?—That is the average cost of running those additional trains which the Department would be forced to run.

111. Six shillings is the average cost of train-mileage in New Zealand, is it not?—Yes.

112. So that you are debiting us with 80,000 miles at 6s. per mile?—Yes.

113. And you allow nothing for the fares or freights which those trains earn?—If I debited you with the actual cost of running expenses you would find it would be much in excess of 6s. per mile. They are the Auckland expresses.

114. That is not quite candid. I am not asking you about your figures with reference to the Auckland trains. I have accepted your figures as to that. I am now taking your suggestion that we should be charged with 80,000 additional train-miles and be allowed nothing for it?—Undoubtedly you should not. You are asking us to run 80,000 additional train-miles to deal with the traffic we have now and are dealing with by present services.

115. Now, with regard to the connection by the tram with the line at or near Marton, that connection may apparently be of three kinds, as suggested by the Chairman. First of all, the tramway may be permitted to be connected with the station premises, by what I think it is convenient to call a parallel or terminal siding: that is the first way?—A dead-end—a parallel siding without a connection.

116. Yes?—Yes, that is a dead-end.

117. The next method is a connection with the railway by a minor siding, with no running-rights—no interchange of trucks?—Yes.

118. And the third is a junction with the railway-line under some form of running agreement?—Yes.

119. Do you know that for years the policy in England has been to construct light railways where the alternative is either road carriage or no road railway?—Yes; I am quite aware of that.

120. All those light railways involve the cost of transhipment, do they not?—Yes.

121. Could you give me an idea of what the cost of transhipment would be in New Zealand for ordinary merchandise per ton—that is to say, assuming a parallel siding or dead-end?—At the present time it costs us about 1s. 3d. a ton to handle the stuff.

122. Is that not a very high charge for transhipping from one truck to another truck?—That is the cost with the present rate of wages.

123. You do not think it is high?—No.

124. What is it in England per ton?—I do not know.