

125. Authorities say that it is 9d. per ton?—There is a great difference in wages there and here.

126. Is it not a fact that a good deal of traffic at Marton Junction has to be transhipped?—Not a great deal, no. We have what we call transshipping-wagons, but they are only small consignments.

127. Is it not a fact that it is only full through trucks on which transhipment is avoided?—No, that is not so.

128. Is there not a great deal of transhipment necessarily required where the freights are less than a truck-load?—Some transhipment is required, but it depends on what you call a load. We fill up at Palmerston, which is a transshipment station.

129. Could you give me an idea of the quantity of transhipment done at Palmerston, in tonnage?—No, I could not tell you straight away. It is a very small proportion to the total tonnage passing through Palmerston.

130. Would it be 20 per cent.?—No.

131. Or at Marton?—No, nor at Marton either.

132. Could you give me an idea of the percentage?—No, I could not give you the percentage at present.

133. I understand you are fearful that the local Marton trade will be diverted to Foxton: am I correct in that supposition?—No, I am not fearful of the Marton trade. My remarks have been dealing with the position generally.

134. I understood you to say that, assuming a terminal siding at or near Marton Station, that would cause a diversion of Marton traffic to Foxton?—No, not Marton traffic, but traffic to Marton Station and beyond. You see, the distance from Wanganui to Marton is, roughly, thirty-six miles, and the distance to Foxton is about thirty-two or thirty-three, via the Sanson Tram. That difference in distance is going to affect the charges on all goods to Marton and beyond by the Main Trunk line.

135. Why?—Because of the shorter distance and the difference in freight.

136. But you are now contrasting goods which go over from Marton to Foxton, or which go from Marton to Wanganui and beyond?—Yes, Wanganui to Marton and beyond, and Foxton to Marton and beyond.

137. Do you not know that there is a considerable difference in the sea freights in favour of Wanganui as against Foxton?—I am not aware of it. The information I got from the shipping companies here a few weeks ago was that the freights were identical, and if the Foxton Harbour were improved the difference would probably be in favour of Foxton.

138. Then your opinion is that the freights, Wellington to Wanganui and Wellington to Foxton, are the same?—Yes.

139. Of course, any diversion of traffic to Wanganui and beyond is problematical, is it not?—No, I do not think it is. The tendency is to send by the cheaper route.

140. But has Foxton now got conditions which will enable it to deal more cheaply with that class of freight? First of all, there are only small steamers; and, secondly, the service is uncertain?—I do not think the evidence shows that the service is uncertain. The list of strandings given by the Harbourmaster at Foxton does not show that they form any very great percentage of the total number of ships, and as far as the size of the vessel is concerned, if instead of having one vessel capable of coming into Foxton there are fifty available, you can very easily see that it will cause a large diversion of traffic. I know from my experience and observations that if the trade is there they will get boats.

141. I ask you to assume that Foxton is capable of reasonable expansion—of it being made a satisfactory harbour. Is it the policy of the Department to prevent reasonable railway facilities for the development of such a harbour?—The Department has not said it is either.

142. If Foxton can deal more profitably with a class of freight, why should it not?—It is not the policy that is involved. The point is that the Foxton people want the wharf, and we say, "Very well: we do not want to dispose of it, but there is the price." That is obviously the point in dispute.

143. I am not concerned with that, but I understand one of your objections to allowing us a connection at Marton is that you fear there will be a diversion of trade which now goes through Marton and north to Foxton and Marton and north?—I know perfectly well there will be.

144. But is that a legitimate reason for refusing a connection—assuming it to be so?—I consider it to be perfectly legitimate for the railway to protect its own interests and the revenue in the interests of the community.

145. Without consideration to the effect that in the interests of settlement goods could be carried cheaper?—The Railway Department has to consider the general interests, and that is what it is doing.

146. *The Chairman.*] From another point of view, might it not pay the Railway Department to develop the Port of Foxton, which might ease the traffic about Paekakariki?—If the Port of Foxton were the port of termination for the Main Trunk line between Auckland and Wellington it would be so.

147. But supposing it could only be used for the carriage of goods and coal, it might help you to have a railway, and so prevent congestion between Wellington and Paekakariki—you might put on an extra charge, as on local lines?—That might have been all very well in the early days, but not when you have got settled conditions, such as we have at the present time.

148. *Mr. Skerrett.*] At any rate, you think that the trade could be more advantageously carried, at cheaper rates, from Foxton to Marton and north by this connection with the railway than it could be done at the present time?—The trade would be carried if the connection were made at a cheaper rate for the reason that the distance is shorter.