

173. Assume that your general principle is set aside for the time being: there would be no objection to the light trucks of the Sandon Tramway being hauled over the Government line?—No objection if they are up to the Government standard.

174. *Mr. Hannay.*] There would be a practical objection to a private company's trucks going on the Government line, would there not?—Yes, there would be.

175. There would be a difficulty about the return?—Yes.

176. *Mr. Skerrett.*] There is this to be said: that the Sandon people could always control the class of truck which they load, could they not?—Yes, I should think so. But I should say it would be difficult to control it on that line with no station staff.

177. We have heard that the exports from the Sandon district are first of all wool. Foxton has exceptional facilities for dealing with wool, has it not?—Foxton has facilities, but I do not think they are exceptional.

178. It is an advantage, we have heard, for the wool to be taken on board the coastal steamer direct and shipped direct to the Home steamer?—As against that there is the fact that the quantity of wool railed to Foxton, according to the statement put in by Mr. Elliott this year, formed a very small portion of the output of wool for the district. The bulk of it came to Wellington.

179. Therefore you do not fear the competition from Foxton in regard to wool?—But we might get it. We know perfectly well from our experience that you can get very severe competition from Foxton.

180. The other exports are butter and cheese: we have heard they would not go to Foxton?—Under present conditions, no; but if the steamers had freezing-chambers I can conceive it possible.

181. But I am talking of Foxton. It is hyper-timidity to suggest any competition in butter and cheese?—The whole thing comes down to this question: it is the slow process; it is the dropping at one end and then at the other.

182. The only other products which come from this district are grain and fodder: those are unlikely to go to Foxton—the market is not there?—According to what I know, grain would go to where it can get the cheapest freight, and that would be via Foxton. The demand is for the northern market, and therefore what we gained through it not being shipped at Foxton we would lose through it being shipped over the Sandon Tramway if the connection were made.

183. I understand you to give as an instance of this competition the motor traffic by lorry to Feilding. I understand you to say kerosene and benzine and sugar are carried to Sandon by tram, and farther to Feilding by motor-lorry?—Yes.

184. Of course, benzine is a high-freighted article?—It is rate and a half, Class A, and my complaint in regard to it was that, although we were told by the tramway people that they had adopted our classification, the charges made by them in respect to benzine point strongly to the conclusion that they do not charge rate and a half, Class A.

185. Is it not a fact that benzine is an article which adapts itself to competition with the railway for road carriage over short distances?—Yes, there is a good deal of benzine carried in that way.

186. Have you taken it into consideration that Feilding is one of the market towns of the Sandon district?—Yes, that is so.

187. And merchants at Feilding make deliveries of their wares into the Sandon district, and take sugar and kerosene by way of return cargo?—I cannot say how the carriage is done, but I understand there are two tradesmen who are carrying.

188. You see, when you get your benzine, or kerosene, or sugar at Feilding there is cartage from the railway-station to the store?—Yes.

189. That would be about 2s. per ton?—I should not think it would be as much as that. I do not know what the cartage rates are there, but I should say that a merchant who would use a lorry for carting from Sandon to Feilding would also have a lorry for his own carting from Feilding Station.

190. Would you mind telling me from the railway returns the proportion of heavy trucks to light trucks in the North Island?—The bulk of the trucks are light trucks. There are 5,000 four-wheeled trucks and about 800 heavier trucks.

191. What is about the residue, approximately?—About 3,600 trucks.

192. Do you say that the lighter trucks are less in number?—No. 3,600 are light trucks; there are 4,500 L's; and the total of the heavier trucks amounts to about 800.

193. Is it not a fact that the Marton—Palmerston Section is a section which carries very heavy traffic?—Yes; there is heavy traffic over that portion, but it is certainly no greater than the traffic carried on many other portions of the main line.

194. I understand you cannot give me the train-mileage and tonnage carried over that section?—I could give the mileage, but not the tonnage.

195. May I put it that this section, Marton to Palmerston North, is a good-paying section?—I have no doubt that the Marton—Palmerston North Section pays its way.

196. But it pays more than a great many other sections on the line?—There are certain sections that do not pay.

*Re-examination re Sandon Tramway and Railway Deviation.*

197. *Mr. Myers.*] Do I understand you to say that all but 800 trucks could go on this tramway?—Oh, no.

198. Does it follow that all the trucks but those could go on the tram-line?—No, it does not necessarily follow. There are about 3,750 LA, and about 3,500 L's.

199. There is something less than half?—Yes; about half could go on. The L's include wagons of varying capacity.