

112. *The Chairman.*] You have more roads?—No, not that chiefly. It is on account of the motor-cars. To give you some idea: in 1904 we were spending somewhere in the vicinity of about £3,000 for ordinary road-repairs; at the present time the ordinary road-repairs of the Manawatu County Council are nearer £10,000.

113. *Mr. Myers.*] The more roads the more traffic?—There are not very many more roads. There are certainly more roads, but it is the increase of traffic and the different class of traffic.

114. Can you tell the Commission what quantity of metal or gravel you carry on your tramway per annum for your road purposes?—Somewhere in the vicinity of from 5,000 to 7,000 yards per annum.

115. That includes supplies to settlers, does it not?—Yes.

116. You cannot say what proportion of that is supplied to settlers?—Not a great quantity—500 to 800 yards.

117. Can you, then, tell the Commission what you think the tramway saves your county in regard to metal and so forth?—No, I could not say, for the simple reason that in the bottom end of the district it would be absolutely prohibitive—at present, anyway—to cart metal at all. You would have to pay approximately, in some portions, over £1 a yard.

118. Then, I may take it that this tramway as it exists now is essential for the purposes of the County Council, and that the only alternative is that if the Government acquire the tramway they must make provision to meet your requirements with respect to gravel?—Yes.

119. What do you mean by that: do you mean that the Government should supply it at their schedule rates?—At the Government schedule rates for local bodies. It is half the ordinary tariff rate, a minimum of 1s. 8d. per ton. It depends on the distance carried.

120. Then, I think it has been already stated that you would expect the Government to supply it at your own time?—At the time suitable for metalling.

121. And I suppose you would require it to be delivered all along the line?—I do not think we could expect to have it delivered at any place but a siding.

122. Very well, at a siding. Do you mean to say the existing sidings or stopping-places?—I presume so; yes.

123. You mean to say that if the Government were running a railway along there, what you are asking would be impossible, would it not, or impracticable?—No.

124. Could you reasonably expect the Government, on a line of railway, to run its trucks and deliver metal to you all along the line for a mile or two?—They do it for their own purposes at the present time; why should they not do it for us?

125. They do it when it is convenient for themselves?—They do it when it is required.

126. You would require the metal at different places at different times, would you not—you could not have it deposited on the road?—No. We put it out at the present time at a special period during the year.

127. But at one place at a time?—No. We run a special works-train and put it out in heaps where it is required. I may state that not only do we put it out on our own line, but we also run a special train on the Government line, with their permission, and deliver the metal for road purposes—that is, on the Foxton line.

128. Now I want you to come back to the receipts and payments for 1916. I see that in that year your expenditure amounts, not deducting the £500 for material, to £4,900?—Yes.

129. What is the reason for that?—There was more traffic on the line; increase of wages; we relaid about half a mile of the line with new rails, and there was the cost of labour for putting those rails in. The charge for labour was included in working-expenses, and was not charged in the £500, which is for material.

130. I see your income has increased to £5,622?—Yes.

131. Can you tell us how much of that is net earnings?—I could not tell you offhand.

132. I suppose it would be slightly greater than in the previous year?—Yes. I might state here that the increased traffic of the last year was considerable. In 1915 the traffic fell off; also in 1914, owing to the strike. The traffic was absolutely held up for some time during the strike, which cut down our revenue, as we are dependent on the Port of Foxton, and nothing was coming into the Port of Foxton. In 1915 there was a falling-off of traffic, on account of the war. People did not get the ordinary quantity of goods over our line. There was a great fall in the volume of traffic some months after the war started. And in 1916 the traffic sprang up again, as settlers were prosperous, and the traffic increased very much.

133. You have had a lot of inwards cargo through Foxton pretty regularly?—Yes, fairly regularly.

134. Evidently more so than the previous year?—I do not know whether it has been more regular than in the previous year. That could easily be proved by the steamer-charges account when they come in.

135. You get a certain quantity of posts and firewood down from the north?—We get no firewood at all. We do not use firewood. There is a small quantity in the district, but it is only stump firewood. Coal is used. There is practically no firewood coming into the district from outside.

136. You say the actual general imports have been increasing?—Yes.

137. In posts and firewood they amount to—1899, 103 trucks; 1904, 100 trucks; 1909, 84 trucks; 1914, 79 trucks; 1915, 68 trucks?—Yes.

138. That has been gradually decreasing, has it not?—Yes.

139. Do you think, if you have this tramway extension, that your importation of posts and firewood will increase?—Yes.

140. From whence have you been getting posts in the past?—They have been coming from the Dannevirke district and from up the Main Trunk line. But the Dannevirke district is practically cut out now.