

176. Can you say what length of 40 lb. rails was second-hand?—No, they were put in before my time.

177. Have you any private crossings in existence over your tramway?—Yes; but I could not tell you how many there are.

178. Can you tell us what is the minimum speed per hour which you run on the line?—It just depends on what rails were being run over, and according to what is the load.

179. What is the maximum speed per hour on any part of the line?—Eighteen to twenty miles per hour.

180. Do they go at that speed?—Yes, on parts of the line. That speed can be maintained on the greater part of the 40 lb. rails.

181. And what is the maximum speed on the 28 lb. rails?—About fourteen miles an hour.

182. Have you any maximum speed fixed by your company?—Not to my knowledge.

183. How many bridges have you on your line?—Five, built of totara and ironbark.

184. Have any of them been renewed?—One has been partially renewed, and one is being renewed at the present time, and they are all subject to inspection by the Government Railways Bridge Inspector, and they are repaired and kept up to his satisfaction.

Statement of Mr. RICHARDSON. (No. 27.)

Mr. Skerrett: At this stage I desire to read a statement by Mr. Richardson, Clerk of the Rangitikei County Council. He is unable to attend to give evidence. The statement reads,—

“With reference to your request for some information regarding the portion of the Rangitikei County more immediately affected by the linking-up of the Main Trunk Railway-line with the Sandon Tramway from a point at or near Marton, or the construction of a through railway-line from Marton to Levin, and which would cross the Rangitikei River near Bull’s, I beg to state that the two ridings of the county mostly concerned would be Rangitoto and Porewa, especially the former. The capital valuations of the two ridings are as follows: Rangitoto, £767,409; Porewa, £792,348. The areas are, roughly—Rangitoto, 100 square miles; Porewa, 55 square miles. The numbers of ratepayers are—Rangitoto, 193; Porewa, 484. The Rangitoto Riding extends from a point about one mile south of Marton to the ocean, and with an average width of about seven miles. The northern portion of this riding, and also an area around the Town District of Bull’s (which is excluded from the riding), is farmed in fairly small areas—say, 200 to 300 acres—but there are a few holdings of considerable size, one of 1,400 acres. The class of farming carried on within this area is chiefly cropping and sheep farming, with a little dairying. The land is being much improved by draining, &c., and I consider will be capable of further subdivision, though perhaps not to a great extent, for some years to come. The southern portion of the Rangitoto Riding consists of land of a different character. Towards the coast it is necessarily of a sandy nature; but with the exception of a strip along the coast the soil is good and in some parts of the finest quality, especially the flats along the Rangitikei River. There are a number of large holdings in this part of the riding, containing about 25,000 acres, which are capable of subdivision, and a considerable area of the land served by the Bull’s-Scott’s Road is suitable for dairying. The class of farming carried on in this portion of the riding is chiefly sheep and cattle, with a little cropping; dairy-farming, however, has in recent years been carried on to some extent in consequence of the subdivision of some of the former large holdings. The Porewa Riding extends from the Rangitoto Riding on the south to about six miles north of the Borough of Marton, and from the Rangitikei River on the east to beyond the watershed of the Rangitikei and Turakina Rivers. The remarks in regard to the northern portion of the Rangitoto Riding generally apply to the southern portion of the Porewa Riding, except that immediately around the Borough of Marton there is a considerable suburban settlement, and the Township of Marton Junction also comes within the riding. With the exception of one property of nearly 2,000 acres there are no large holdings in this portion of the riding. In the northern portion of this riding the land is partly undulating and hilly, and the holdings are somewhat larger and chiefly used for sheep-farming. The whole of the land in the riding, while varying in quality in parts, can all be considered as first class, and is capable of yet further development.”

HOWARD NICHOLSON sworn and examined. (No. 28.)

1. *Mr. Luckie.* You are a farmer residing at Otaroa, about eight miles from Levin and five miles from Foxton?—Yes.

2. How many acres do you farm?—About 524.

3. What class of farming do you carry on?—Mixed farming—sheep and dairying.

4. Have you done any cropping?—Yes; I did some cropping three years ago, and I have been cropping ever since.

5. You were born in the district?—Yes.

6. And are you well acquainted with it?—Yes; I am very well acquainted with the whole district lying between the Manawatu River and Levin.

7. About how many acres which are held in large areas would be served by this proposed railway-line if it went through that district?—I should say, close on 20,000 acres.

8. What is it mostly used for now?—Sheep-farming.

9. If the railway went through on the proposed route from Levin to Foxton, how would it affect this land?—It would affect it in this way: there would be more settlers there.