

39. *Mr. Innes.*] Do you know the Sandon Township and the district?—I have been through it a good many times.

40. In the township there are no buildings of any kind going up, are there?—I could not say. There were none actually going up the last time I was there, but buildings do go up in that district.

41. Yes, when the buildings fall done. I suggest to you that there is practically no building going on in that district?—Yes, building is going on.

42. In any substantial amount?—A fair amount. There is a fair consumption of timber in that district.

43. Do you know what timber comes into the district?—I should say, speaking from memory in regard to the return I have seen, it varies from 350,000 to half a million feet per year. I got my figures from the Sandon tramway returns.

44. Is there any building going on in the Township of Bull's, say, during the last few years?—Yes.

45. Has it not been standing still like Sandon?—No, it is a very live district down there.

46. And the bulk of the timber comes from where?—The timber has to come from the Ohakune district.

47. You have a good market in Hamilton and Auckland?—No.

48. Do you send anything much north of Horopito?—We send some material north, but the main markets are south.

49. The timber is being fast cut out, up there, I understand?—It is being cut out.

50. The supply of timber is a declining trade?—It is not declining at the present moment: it is increasing. The output on the Main Trunk line is greater to-day than it was four or five years ago.

51. And the imports of foreign timber into New Zealand are greater to-day, are they not?—No; the import of foreign timber last year was less than during the previous year.

52. You supply posts to this district, do you not?—Yes, but not a great deal. I have supplied them to the Sandon district.

53. Do you know of any mills supplying here?—No, I do not know who supplies posts to Palmerston.

54. Is there not a difficulty in obtaining posts from the Main Trunk line now?—Only at certain seasons of the year. The difficulty in getting posts from the Main Trunk line is governed to a certain extent by the weather and the state of the roads leading up to the Main Trunk line. I know that at the present moment there are a large number of posts lying outside Utiku waiting for the weather to improve.

55. There is no scarcity of timber, then?—No, there is any amount of timber suitable for split posts.

56. *Mr. Myers.*] Do you say that all the timber which goes into the Sanson district now comes from the Main Trunk line?—No, not all of it.

57. Where else does it come from?—There is only a small portion, which may come through the Port of Foxton.

58. We may take it that for all practical purposes the whole of it comes from the Main Trunk line?—Yes, for all practical purposes.

59. Do you say that the whole of it, or the greater part of it, which is sent from the Main Trunk line to the Sanson district goes over the present Sanson Tramway?—The greater portion of it does.

60. If all the timber which goes into that district comes from the Main Trunk line and goes over the Sanson Tramway, how is it that the Sanson Tramway, if extended, is going to increase its revenue so far as timber is concerned?—It would in one way increase its revenue by the carriage of timber which it cannot touch at present. Timber for the Bull's district, extending from the Greatford Station down to Parewanui, is carted from Greatford Station, whereas if the tramway were extended to touch Bull's it would carry that timber.

61. Then the extension would carry the timber that is now taken up by dray to Bull's?—Yes.

62. And the Railway Department would make a corresponding loss, would they not?—The timber which I said just now would be additional traffic to the tram is already railed to Greatford Station. The railway-train would still bring it up to Marton or Greatford.

63. Now, with regard to firewood and posts, is the Commission to take it from you that the Sanson district at present gets this firewood and posts from the Main Trunk line?—Principally. If they get it at all it has to come from that locality.

64. They could not get firewood anywhere else?—It is possible, but not as far as I know.

65. Have you seen how much firewood and posts are carried on the Sanson tram?—No.

66. Would you be surprised to know that it is a mere bagatelle?—I would not be at all surprised. That may be due to the high cost of carting it, and the consumption may increase if it were not so.

67. If the consumption of firewood increased you would expect the consumption of coal to decrease proportionately?—Yes.

68. So that any amount derived would be lost so far as carriage is concerned?—Yes.

69. So that if during the last few years the quantity of coal carried over the Sanson Tramway increased and firewood decreased, you would expect if they started importing firewood that the import of coal would decrease?—Yes. With regard to posts, they might possibly increase if settlement increased. The demand for fencing-posts would increase if the areas were smaller and required fencing off.

70. You do not suggest that it would be anything like a big trade?—But if you take any one section of traffic on its own, nothing is big. It is the bulk traffic which makes up.