

The existing accommodation is quite inadequate to meet satisfactorily the requirements of the present traffic, and the business is now being carried on at a very great inconvenience, and under many disadvantages to the public and the Department alike. Owing to the restricted area of the yard and its situation in the heart of the town, it is impracticable to carry out the improvements and provide the accommodation that is essentially necessary to meet the requirements of the prospective traffic of the near future. The inconveniences that arise under present circumstances to road traffic which has to pass over the numerous railway-crossings, and the difficulties that occur in connection with the local traffic, are so well known to yourself and the members of the Council as to make it unnecessary for me to enlarge thereon. The main point for consideration in the interests of the Dominion, your town, and the Department is the solution of the difficulties and the provision of facilities that will provide not only for the moment but the future requirements of a large and rapidly growing railway traffic. This problem has engaged the serious attention of the Department, and after giving the matter mature consideration I am firmly convinced that the only satisfactory solution of the difficulty is the deviation of the railway-line near Longburn to the west of Boundary Road, and the construction of a new and up-to-date station on a site approximately between Kairanga and Rangitiki Roads, as shown in block on the plan. This would at once do away with all level crossings, as the scheme would provide for overbridges for road traffic on the main arterial roads leading into Palmerston North. Ample provision would be made for all future requirements, and the station could be placed on its permanent site.

The railway running-lines between Longburn Junction and Terrace End now occupy a portion of the reserve for road and railway. The removal of the present running-lines would enable the main thoroughfare to be widened, and give residents on the west side of the Palmerston-Longburn Road direct access to the main road. Furthermore, it would settle once and for all the difficulties that have arisen in connection with the closing of Cook Street, and remove an obstacle to the connection of the east and west sides of your town by electric tramway when that scheme is carried into effect.

As evidence of the necessity for now dealing comprehensively with the matter, I may state for your information that in the last twenty years the passenger business at Palmerston North has increased by 300 per cent., the outward live-stock business by 600 per cent., timber traffic by 400 per cent., other goods by 200 per cent., and revenue by 600 per cent. For the same period the increases in inward business are—Cattle, 385 per cent.; sheep, 90 per cent.; pigs, 337 per cent.; minerals, 767 per cent.; other goods, 272 per cent.

Notwithstanding the war, the increases during the last five years have been: Outward traffic—Passenger, 20 per cent.; timber, 12½ per cent.; other goods, 52 per cent.; revenue, 72 per cent. Inward traffic—Cattle and sheep, 7 per cent.; pigs, 1,762 per cent.; minerals, 8 per cent.; other goods, 14 per cent.

The number of railway-vehicles which have to be handled at Palmerston North during the day ranges from 1,500 to 2,000, exclusive of those on through trains.

Apart altogether from the consideration of local requirements it is imperatively necessary that the accommodation at such an important subterminal railway-station as Palmerston North should be sufficient to provide for the requirements of the ever-increasing volume of traffic between the various termini that has necessarily to pass through and be dealt with at the subterminal station. This aspect of the question has been taken into very serious consideration by the Department in preparing the proposals, which are on a scale that makes ample provision for present and future requirements.

I shall be obliged if you will place the matter before your Council for consideration, with a view to obtaining their concurrence therein.

Mr. F. W. MACLEAN, Chief Engineer of the Railway Department, attended before the Commission and produced—(1.) Plan of Palmerston North with existing station and lines belonging to the Railway Department. (2.) Plan showing proposed new site of railway-station.

These plans were discussed and explained to the members of the Commission.

The Commission adjourned till next day at 11 a.m.

#### WELLINGTON, FRIDAY, 4TH MARCH, 1921.

The Commission met at 11 a.m., Sir James Wilson and Mr. W. H. Field, M.P., being present.

*The Chairman (to Sir James Wilson):* Well, Sir James, from the conversation I had with you I understand you merely want time in order to bring evidence before the Commission in connection with the question of the deviation of the railway-line from Paekakariki to Marton, and that you are not prepared with that evidence at present.

*Sir James Wilson:* No. I want to explain that I only ascertained within the last few days that the order of reference of the Commission has been extended to enable the Commission to take evidence upon other matters in addition to the Palmerston North Railway-station.

*The Chairman:* We ourselves only knew yesterday.

*Sir James Wilson:* You will understand that the matter has been sprung upon us suddenly, and we are not in a position to give our evidence at present. We desire to bring forward some expert evidence on the matter, but the time at our disposal has not been sufficient. If the Commission could take what evidence is offering at Palmerston North and then give us the opportunity of bringing forward our evidence in Wellington possibly at a later date, that would be satisfactory. I should like to say, first of all, gentlemen, on behalf of the people on the coast, that we are really not anxious that the expenditure necessary for this deviation should be incurred at the present time. We would not have suggested it had it not been for the proposed expenditure in connection with Palmerston North. We do not deem it desirable to incur the expenditure at the present time, but we think our evidence will show that if the money is to be spent it would be better to spend it in another direction—namely, from Levin to Greatford—which would be of greater benefit to the community in the future. We have not yet ascertained what would be the cost of this deviation, nor have we any idea of the estimated cost of the proposed alterations at Palmerston North. However, we think the matter is so important that the Commission should have a detailed survey of the line between Levin and Greatford. We do not think it is right to thrust this expenditure upon the local bodies when it is really a Government matter. It is really a matter of great moment to the country, and therefore it will be suggested to the Commission that some general survey of the line should be made by some independent person, or by any engineer that you may select, and that would indicate to the Commission some degree of comparison as to the expenditure on the two lines.