

occasion was very brief, and I made a very cursory examination of the conditions. I was able to go down and see the site where it is said the station is going to be. I went down to Kairanga Road and examined the properties very cursorily on both sides of the line. I also looked at the station, and can quite corroborate what has been stated that the present conditions are abominable, and it is very difficult to do anything at all properly. That I may say generally. I only desire to refer to the general features, because the details of a thing of this kind must be finally worked out by the Railway officers, and therefore I am only giving a general opinion. As to the floods, I have always remembered the saying of a man who had a great experience with rivers, roads, and bridges in New Zealand. That was the late Mr. Blackett. His dictum was that whenever you get the record of highest flood, a few years later you are sure to have one higher. That is not a joke—there is a principle underlying it, and that is, in countries where there is a sudden change from rough country and watersheds to plains, and thence to the sea, with plains rising and land forming and extending farther seawards, it is invariably the case that there are great deposits of drift coming down from the higher country. The land is always rising more or less with the river-beds, and consequently the floods are always, in that stage of geological existence, tending to get higher. With regard to this particular place, I know very little about it, but I have had something to do with the Manawatu during past years, although it is so long ago that I forget a good deal about it. This particular place is liable to flood from two streams which rise on the west side of the ranges. That is one place where flood-water comes from; and on the other side the Manawatu River floods from the east coast, and, as occasionally happens, there are great rainfalls and floods from both sides. The two western streams get backed up by the Manawatu, and that causes the extreme flood. That is about all I know of the general features. If you are going to put a station on that site you must reckon to put it at least a couple of feet above the last flood-level. It is always difficult to get the exact thing, and you will probably have to reclaim. You will possibly have to provide a yard of filling for every square yard of ground. Supposing there are 80 acres, and you have 5,000 yards to the acre, that is 400,000 yards of filling. You have to buy the land to get filling from; you cannot take it from the adjoining area, and you would have to go up to the Gorge to get land, and bring every yard of stuff down by rail. When you get the stuff at the site there is the further cost of spreading, because with a shallow reclamation you are constantly breaking the road about to get the stuff distributed; I should not be surprised if it cost 4s. or 5s. a yard. Suppose it cost 4s. which is one-fifth of £1, the 400,000 yards would cost £80,000. I am only talking generalities, but I think if you look into the matter closely you will find it will cost something like that to provide the filling for the site of the station. That is as far as that site is concerned. Presuming you have unlimited funds and can do what you please, it is a very nice thing to have heaps of room and be able to design a station without the smallest restriction in any way to get the best condition of things you can. I quite agree with Mr. McVilly that it is most important that you should have the best facilities for shunting, sorting wagons, and doing everything at that station. It is not the mere economy you effect by this work at the station itself—you cannot trace the economies—the economy is effected in the distribution of the goods and stock and other ways; so I quite agree with Mr. McVilly that you should have the best accommodation to give the best results. However, there is one aspect of the question which I do not agree with. I think that to divert the railway and to spend £750,000 on making a new station is the height of extravagance. I do not think there is any reason in it, especially in these times when everything in the way of economy is so important. £700,000 for one station! It is terrible! Then I have also seen plans showing the various proposals.

*Mr. Luckie.*] You refer to the red and green schemes?—Yes. As you know, I was only able to look over some one else's shoulder to get an insight into the ideas, but when I heard Mr. MacLean's evidence in regard to the proposals, how impracticable everything was, and how costly, as far as I could judge, I agreed with him that the proposals were as bad as could be, and I would not like to express my opinion very deliberately after hearing his evidence. I quite agree with Mr. MacLean that it is very impracticable to do anything on the present site of the station.

You consider that the two proposals are totally inadequate for any purpose?—I accept Mr. MacLean's evidence as quite clear on the subject. It would be very impracticable and costly to do anything on that site. I do not think I need say anything more about the plans. I might say, however, that the only difficulties in retaining the station on the present route are taking enough land suitably situated, and dealing with a moderate amount of road and street traffic across the lines. These are the only two difficulties that present themselves to me. If you take enough land suitably situated you can make as good a station as any one is capable of designing. With regard to crossings, I would say that where trucks have to stand for some time and trains have to wait, together with considerable shunting, you should not have a street-crossing on the level; but it is quite absurd to imagine that you have to spend £700,000 on another station because you have a couple of streets which have to be crossed.

*Mr. Myers.*] We have not suggested that?—The railway-crossing question has been made a great deal too much of. People get the railway-crossing mania: It is a regular mania. I look around this room and see people with whom I have been associated for years working together in the same Department and attending to the same business, and they will know that I am not talking complete nonsense. I say that the railway-crossing business has become a regular mania. Now, just think of this: we were told that there were twenty trains in and twenty trains out of Palmerston North Station in a day, and going over a level crossing somewhere up the road. The most a railway-train would take in passing over a crossing would be something under half a minute, and if there are forty trains a day over that crossing, they would occupy twenty minutes at the very outside—that is to say, less than one minute an hour. Then, the people who constantly get wild—we have all got wild about it, and I am as bad as the rest of my