

as tenants. Of course the details would have to be left to the Department to work out. Then you would put your engine-shed at the end. I understand it is hardly big enough now. I saw in one of the estimates £50,000 for engine-sheds, but I hardly think, if you build the additional accommodation first and then move the present engine-shed down, that the £50,000 would be necessary. I have not studied the point much, but I should be inclined to put down £10,000 instead of £50,000. Now in regard to the question of the levels. I think some trouble was made about this. It is not an invariable custom to put railway-stations on the level. The English line I was engaged on the construction of was the South-western line. A grade of 1 in 200 was allowed for stations; with a grade of 1 in 300 you could hardly tell whether it was a grade or level—most people would not be able to tell with their eye. You could get a grade of 1 in 300 in the present position quite easily. Any little grading that it might be necessary to make in the extension could be done if required, by very little filling. I mention that incidentally. It is not a desirable thing to go in for a large amount of filling to obtain a dead level; and not only that, it would be extravagant. They can do very well with a grade of 1 in 300, and I believe that is obtainable. I understand that part of the line is on a grade of 1 in 600. Then, the Chief Engineer, in his examination, said that it would be necessary to take some immediate steps to give accommodation at the present station to deal with the goods, and I am quite certain he is right. One only needs to be a quarter of an hour there when trains are coming in to recognize that fact. It is very badly wanted, and if they design the station at that place they will design the existing sidings to work in with the new scheme. If they do that they should be able to make a very great improvement in twelve months' time. On the other route they say they can do it in five years, but we all know how Governments act, and we could not reckon on getting it done in five years. It might be done, but it is very improbable. At the same time, twelve months would enable them to put additional accommodation on the present route; in the meantime that would be of very material advantage to the working.

And would it be of use later?—They would no doubt design a new scheme to make use of the existing sidings and accommodation. I do not think they should make a clean sweep of everything they have got and begin *de novo*. They could not very well do that. In my opinion they certainly should not spend one-third of what they propose in the deviation to carry that out. I am only taking a bird's-eye view of the situation, because I have not had time to go into the matter in detail. However, I should not be at all surprised if it cost less than £200,000. It depends on what you do, and whether you are going to make half a dozen overbridges. I would taboo the overbridges, with the exception of one at Cook Street.

*The Chairman.*] And any subway?—I would not have a subway. I think possibly the work might be done for £175,000. I do not know much about the present conditions, but I am quite sure that the suggestions of the expenditure of £700,000 is the wildest extravagance one could possibly go in for. I would not have it.

*Mr. Luckie.*] Do you consider that such an expenditure on any feasible proposal is in any sense justified?—I said at the outset that it is not justified. I think it is very extravagant. I do not think the objects that the General Manager and the Chief Engineer are aiming at are extravagant, but I think they could attain them on the present route. There is one point I should like to mention. The idea was expressed by the General Manager and the Chief Engineer that if they took the railway-station away they would have 7,000 ft. of land which could be sold at £30 a foot. My imagination would not carry me that far. You can buy land at £20 a foot in a thick residential area, and the idea of giving £30 a foot for business purposes is ridiculous. They will not get it in my time or our time.

Mr. McVilly brought forward yesterday a statement of the probable cost of operating a railway-line at that point, he suggested, two miles south of Palmerston North, chiefly because there would be a considerable distance between the engine-shed, the yards, and the station, and he produced some very startling figures as a natural consequence. In your opinion, with the necessary area on both sides of the railway-line—

*Mr. Myers.*] Those figures do not apply to one compact station and yards.

*Mr. Luckie.*] Are you satisfied, from the suggestions you have made, considering the railway-station, engine-yards, and sorting-area that could be found in the manner you indicate, that the traffic could be worked as economically as in the proposals made in regard to the deviation?—That was the last remark I made. I think that if you took adequate land in a suitable position you could make the design as good here as anywhere else. I wish to say that there may be more ways than one of taking land and even going farther south, if the Department thinks it better to do so, but I have not had time to consider the aspect of the matter referred to by Mr. McVilly. Mr. Fulton has gone fairly closely into the question and has made a trial sketch-plan, and we have come to the conclusion that we can make just as good a station to the south in most respects as they could do on the diverted line.

And would it have the same reasonable easy means of communication with the Town of Palmerston North as the proposed station?—It is nearly in the same area.

By this method you would avoid all question of interference with the Square for shunting purposes?—We would not shunt over the Square at all.

You say that could be done for something under £200,000?—I said “less than one-third,” and it might be £200,000, but if carefully worked out you might even do it for less than that. It depends upon how prices go. If the price of rails goes up and wages increase we do not know where we are.

In your opinion is there ample land that could be taken there at a moderate cost?—I do not think the land which I have referred to would require the expenditure of £100,000 for compensation. I heard a witness the other day referring to sidings, and the question of the interference with private sidings. I want to say this, because the question of the private siding is a very big one: It is over