

That must be left to the officers of the Department?—They must decide whether it is necessary to go to that expense.

Does not the necessity for a double track depend upon the volume of business on that particular line?—There is no more business between Longburn and Palmerston North than there is in other parts. You are not going to do away with the Longburn Junction altogether; it is needed for the branch line. You are not going to do away with the Foxton Branch. It is no more necessary to have a double line to Longburn than elsewhere: that is my opinion.

What do you estimate for the bridge in Cook Street?—I put down, roughly, for bridges £35,000. I notice that Mr. MacLean puts down for half a dozen bridges £50,000.

No; he puts down seven at £50,000 each?—Before expressing an opinion I should like to see the particulars of Mr. MacLean's estimates. There are bridges and bridges, and a variety of ways of building bridges, and one would like to know exactly what is going to be done before expressing an opinion. I would not put down £350,000 for bridges myself—I would put down £20,000.

Have you during the last few years had anything to do with the building of bridges?—No.

Are not the conditions now quite different from what they were some years ago?—You can take it that you are picking out an old fossil, and he will not talk in a modern tongue exactly.

I am not putting it that way?—No, I know that. I looked at the crossing and the distance, and I thought £20,000 would be sufficient to make a bridge for that place.

There again the men responsible for operating the railways must take the responsibility for saying what bridges are required?—Yes, they must take the responsibility: that is their business. Then, Mr. MacLean puts down £50,000 for contingencies. I have put down £15,000 or £20,000 for contingencies. Mr. MacLean totals up his estimates to £850,000.

Yes, and he includes seven bridges at £50,000 each, which for present purposes I am excluding?—Yes, that is right.

I am assuming for the moment that they are not necessary, and I take off £350,000?—Yes, that is a nice little item to take off. It is a great comfort to know that it is not going to be spent.

But that scheme, according to Mr. MacLean, would cost half a million of money?—I should knock off the £30,000 and the £350,000, which brings the total down to £425,000, and that I think would be double what I would spend.

Without having made a real estimate?—Yes.

You said that it is impossible to estimate the indirect benefits that will result from the improvement of conditions at such a station as Palmerston North?—Yes, I agree with Mr. McVilly that great advantages will accrue to the whole district by having a good station, but I consider it can be got in the south. You cannot estimate the saving very well. The irritation, to begin with, the wear-and-tear of body and soul of the whole staff is a very important, and it is a very serious item.

Mr. McVilly put it yesterday that one of the benefits resulting is that you can use your rolling-stock to very much better advantage?—Yes. At present the public convenience suffers very much, and there is the uncertainty of things in working the traffic. There are a hundred ways in which benefit would accrue.

Those are matters that the man in charge of operations takes into very serious consideration?—Yes. It is very nice if you have *carte blanche* and can do what you wish. It is all very nice where you can carry out your own ideas, but that was not so in my time.

When you prepared the notes upon which you have given evidence to-day were you aware, first, of the increases for the last twenty years, and, secondly, from 1914 in the traffic passing through Palmerston North?—I know in a general way that the traffic is many times greater than when I was in the Railway service. That we all know. It is a very big thing, and with the traffic particularly that goes beyond that station I do not know how they manage to get on.

I suppose you will agree with me that in devising means to meet the present facilities you have got to look a considerable distance ahead?—You must look some distance ahead, but it depends how far you think you can look. You must not attempt to look too far ahead, because you are just apt to go wrong in the distance you think you are looking. It is better to go slow in this case, and better not to be too extravagant in your views. I have seen it done so often in this country. You go and take a lot of land and do all sorts of things for one place, and then it has to be done all over again.

You think the conservative view should be taken?—You should be careful and not extravagant. I think the present proposals are very extravagant.

Would they be extravagant supposing the present traffic were doubled?—I think as far as goods are concerned you could give double the accommodation they have got now quite easily without carrying out the whole scheme.

That does not quite answer my question. Would you say it was an extravagant scheme supposing the traffic were doubled?—I should say it is extravagant to spend £700,000 when you could do it for one-third of that amount.

The view the present Railway officers take is this: that if they were to adopt some such scheme as you have suggested—and it is one of the schemes they have considered—it means that in a few years they would have to recast their ideas again, and probably then, if they found it necessary to divert the line, it is going to cost them a great deal more than it is going to cost them now?—I do not believe that. They can take enough land to do all I suggest.

That you will admit is a matter of opinion upon which you may be right or they may be right?—The whole thing is a matter of opinion, but one's opinion is formed from the circumstances you see around you. Money cannot be thrown away at the present time. You must do something for the goods traffic because you cannot hope to get the diversion for five years, and something must be done in the meantime, but that should be done in a way to enable the Department to go on and complete it later.