

Your scheme is a scheme which may be temporary or permanent?—All schemes are temporary. That scheme would involve a considerable sum of money?—Probably a couple of hundred thousand pounds.

That is necessarily a rough estimate?—Yes. If I could save a couple of hundred thousand pounds by sticking to the present route instead of taking the diversion I would save it.

Even if in five years you had to reconsider the whole position?—You would not reconsider it in five years.

Well, say in ten years?—I think not. You must look forward to an enormous development in the traffic.

I do?—You are trying to look too far ahead. You cannot foresee.

Are you aware of the increase in the traffic since 1914?—I know it has increased several times.

Notwithstanding all the troubles of men being away?—I know it has increased.

And increased very considerably?—Yes, very well; but I think we are apt to take an exaggerated view of it. We have had it in evidence that there are only twenty trains in and twenty trains out in a day, in addition to the through trains. That is not a big traffic. All the trouble arises on account of having the goods arrangement and other things in an unworkable condition. The traffic there is a trifle as compared with that at the larger centres. Then you want to do something as if the traffic were going to increase at a stupendous rate, and you want to provide for fifty years.

Might I suggest to you that in the past large sums of money have been thrown away because people have not been sufficiently far-sighted, and they have constructed works which have not been of sufficient capacity having regard to the necessities of the next few years?—That is what I was just remarking—that in some places we have done work to meet the circumstances in anticipation of more traffic which has not eventuated. In other places, where we have carried out insufficient work, the traffic has increased. You cannot foresee these things. Therefore, you should not make provision for an enormous traffic fifty years hence when you are only concerned with the present.

I am not looking fifty years ahead. I suppose Palmerston must of necessity always be a pretty substantial railway centre, must it not?—It is a main junction accommodating six groups of traffic. You have two groups from the south, although one of them is small—namely, Foxton; two groups from the east coast—Wairarapa and Hawke's Bay; and two from the north—the North Main Trunk and the Taranaki. There are six groups of traffic to deal with.

*Mr. Luckie.* Mr. Myers has asked you a question about the enormous rate of increase in traffic, and puts before you Mr. McVilly's statement showing that the total goods tonnage and passenger traffic between 1897 and 1921, a period of about twenty-four years, has increased about 400 per cent?—I have not seen the return.

Is it not natural to suppose that the rate of increase is not going to be maintained, in view of the fact that it has been largely due to the class of settlement that has taken place during that period?—I really do not know. The traffic has very much increased, and if you get a proper goods-station there will, no doubt, be a similar increase in a similar period.

I take it you are satisfied that the adoption of the scheme you have outlined for a new station at Palmerston North, or an extension of the existing one, will provide, with the area available and with that which can be taken if necessary, all the facilities that can be provided at the station at Rangitikei Street proposed by the Department?—I think you can take land enough in a suitable position on the present route in the way we have suggested to provide all the accommodation and facilities necessary.

And you estimate that that would not cost more than something like £200,000 or under?—That is what I made a rough shot at. I think it ought to be done at £200,000, or under one-third of the cost suggested by the Department.

Would that work take anything like the same length of time as would be involved in the proposed deviation?—I think not. It depends on how the Department is supplied with money; but certainly, to provide some improvement for the goods immediately could be done in a very short time.

You suggest that in the meantime and while the work was in progress you could provide the necessary improvements immediately, which could be co-ordinated with the scheme when completed?—That is generally what is suggested—that you could go on at once and provide some improved facilities which would work in with the scheme to be carried on simultaneously.

Whereas the Department will be obliged to carry out certain temporary expedients and spend money in temporary improvements during the five years that the proposed scheme was being completed, and then those temporary expedients would have to be scrapped?—I think the Department agree that they have to do something at once.

In the one case you could make the temporary improvements useful, and in the other case they would have to be scrapped?—In the other place they would be lost when the present route was given up, or largely so.

In accordance with your scheme, the only two streets that would require to be closed would be Cook Street and West Street?—Yes. I think Cook Street might be bridged if they wanted it, and West Street could be closed. It would not be closed to passenger traffic if you adopt a bridge to the proposed new station from Church Street side of the line.

The question of compensation in connection with the closing of Cook Street has been referred to a good deal. As far as traffic from the eastern side—the Manawatu River side—is concerned which desires to go into the Square, it could equally readily go up Church Street and get into the Square without any inconvenience at all?—I should think so.

The only question would be in regard to people desiring to pass from one side of the line to the other in the same neighbourhood?—Yes.

Is it not a fact that in the case of Palmerston North the natural tendency of the town and its growth has been enlarged to a great extent by the presence of the railway?—I do not know it for a fact,