

WELLINGTON, THURSDAY, 24TH MARCH, 1921.

FRANCIS WILLIAM MACLEAN further examined.

*Mr. Myers.*] You were present when Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Fulton were examined, and you heard everything they said?—Yes.

You have seen the sketch-plan [Exhibit No. 10] that Mr. Fulton prepared and put in, and you have had the opportunity of studying it?—That is so.

Prior to Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Fulton giving evidence, had you considered a scheme very much like that they propound, and is not that the scheme set out as No. 2 alternative in the notes that you handed in to the Commission on a previous occasion?—That is so.

May the Commission take it, therefore, that you had considered a scheme similar to that propounded by Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Fulton, and, after consideration and comparison with the other schemes, discarded it?—Yes, a scheme somewhat on the same lines.

I think you have carefully considered the scheme now propounded by Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Fulton, and that you are able to indicate to the Commission the result of your consideration?—Yes.

Are you as Chief Engineer and as the officer responsible for the operation of the railways prepared to accept that scheme?—Certainly not. I do not operate the stations, but I have to design them, and I am not prepared to accept that scheme at all.

You are prepared to give reasons for that answer?—Yes.

Before I ask you to give the reasons in detail, will you please tell the Commission whether or not the estimate given by Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Fulton of £200,000 for the work they suggest is a sufficient estimate?—I have gone very carefully into the whole thing, and, economizing the expenditure as far as I think possible, I am quite satisfied that the cost of carrying out the proposals of Mr. Fulton, without including any duplication between Longburn and Palmerston North, would involve an expenditure of somewhere at least between £400,000 and £500,000.

And if you add the cost of duplication between Palmerston North and Longburn, what will be the result?—You would have to add to that £50,000, at any rate, which would bring the amount well up to half a million pounds.

I want to see that we are on common ground in regard to one fundamental matter. You have indicated what you think Mr. Fulton's scheme would cost?—Yes.

In your previous evidence you indicated what you thought your own deviation scheme would cost?—Yes.

Have you taken your estimates on the same basis in regard to those two schemes—because I want to ascertain whether you have considered Mr. Fulton's on any different basis from that on which you have considered your deviation scheme, or *vice versa*?—Such estimates must always be on the same basis to form any comparison at all, but I wish to point out in connection with my estimates of the deviation that I have practically in every item exaggerated the cost.

Does that mean that you have allowed what you think is an outside estimate?—A very outside estimate.

And is that estimate based upon present-day prices?—Certainly, present-day prices.

Have you estimated the cost of Mr. Fulton's proposal, carrying it out on present-day prices?—Certainly.

We must take it, therefore, that if present prices become reduced as time goes on during the course of whatever work may be adopted, there would be a proportionate reduction in either scheme?—Yes, certainly.

Now take, first of all, the objections you have to the scheme propounded by Mr. Fulton?—Mr. Fulton's scheme, in the first place, is dependent on the closing of two important streets—namely, West Street and Kairanga Road, or Botanical Road. Those are practically arterial roads—especially Kairanga Road. The Chairman of this Commission will remember the difficulties we have had in connection with Cook Street, which Mr. Fulton proposes to bridge. At any rate, he puts in his estimates an amount for the bridging of Cook Street; but it has to be remembered that we have been advised, and there is no doubt about it, that legislation is necessary to close any street in such a case. Further, these streets are the property of the borough, and we only have the right of user; we have no vested rights over those street-crossings at all. Therefore, any proposal that is made in connection with bridging or dealing with those streets is subject to the approval of the Borough Council. Personally I think it would be hopeless to expect Parliament to agree to the closing of those streets. The Palmerston North Borough Council, the Chamber of Commerce, the Agricultural and Pastoral Association, the Racing Club, and a large portion of the community are very keenly in favour of the new site for the station, and naturally would oppose any legislation which tended to defeat that object.

Or which would involve the closing of the street?—Yes. Mr. Fulton proposes to bridge Cook Street, but so far as I can make out from his sketch-plan he proposes to make some steep approaches. In a level piece of country like Palmerston North, with the area surrounding it, I do not believe that any steeper gradient than 1 in 20 would be tolerated. Further than that, there is the difficulty in connection with the work near Cook Street that the bridge proposed by Mr. Fulton only provides for access across the street, and does not provide for access from Church Street or Main Street.

Mr. Fulton proposes to adopt the American type of station with raised platforms?—

*Mr. Luckie.*] There is no suggestion of that kind.

*Witness.*] I am dealing with the sketch-design as proposed—and that proposal would not be tolerated for one moment.

*Mr. Myers (to witness).*] You see that Mr. Fulton's sketch shows the platform on the American plan?—Yes, and that proposal would not be tolerated in New Zealand. I am quite satisfied of that. It would, of course, destroy the uniformity of our arrangements in regard to our methods of working,