

and taking roading by itself, what I assert with every confidence is, for a road of that kind, and remembering what I said before, that the Borough Council owns the roads and must be satisfied with the construction of it, he would be very lucky indeed if he could do it for £40,000. The total of those items amounts to £190,000 or £200,000, which is practically double the estimate.

That is without any allowance for additional work between Palmerston and Longburn?—Yes, certainly.

*Mr. Luckie.*] You say now that the net cost of your proposed deviation, after making due provision for all the allowances, and probably other estimates of cost which you have been careful enough to make in your original estimates, could now probably be reduced to a net cost of about £340,000?—£400,000.

There is the saving of £60,000?—I said I did not wish that to be deducted.

But as a matter of fact you say it is worth that?—Yes, it is certainly worth that.

That brings it down to £340,000?—Yes.

You really believe that all this saving will be effected, and that the total net cost to the Government, after making provision on that basis, is going to be £340,000?—I would not say so if I did not believe it.

Do you know of any occasion in connection with previous estimates where the estimates have been so much better than the actual results as in this case?—Yes, I do.

You know that in a good many cases in New Zealand in connection with Government institutions the customary thing is for the estimates to be largely exceeded?—I do not wish Mr. Fulton's estimate to be compared with those reduced by me. I wish to put before this Commission as my official estimate the original estimate I put in, and any comparison that would be made would be with the original estimate, the net cost of which was £500,000. I have stated that Mr. Fulton's scheme will cost at least from £400,000 to £500,000.

Does that include the cost of the additional overhead bridges outside the shunting-area?—It does not include any bridges other than Cook Street.

You say that the Cook Street bridge would cost £70,000?—I am sure of it by comparison with present prices.

How much will the Rangitikei Street bridge cost?—£6,000.

Do you not think you would have to provide similar accommodation for traffic at Rangitikei Street, considering the importance of Rangitikei Street, that you would at Cook Street?—Yes, I do.

Then, why is there the difference?—Any engineer would know that.

Unfortunately, I am not an engineer?—It is a difficult thing to explain such engineering matters to a layman, but I will endeavour to do so. At Cook Street you are faced not only with one bridge, but you have to take the approach along Cook Street and Short Street. You have to make an approach in each direction along Main Street, and the same in the case of Church Street. That would mean six approaches, instead of two as in the case of Rangitikei Street. You have, further, to make two additional bridges to allow of level access from one part of Church Street to the other, and from one part of Main Street to the other. At Cook Street you have a bridge which is 6 chains long over the tracks, while at Rangitikei Street you have only about half a chain.

You know, as a matter of fact, do you not, that the great bulk of the traffic that goes over Cook Street goes into the Square, and could easily go up Church Street to get there?—I have already explained what is perfectly apparent to every one—namely, that whatever bridge is made over Cook Street must be done to the satisfaction of the Council, and I am absolutely certain that the Borough Council would insist on what I have said.

Apparently a lot of shunting is going on and nothing has been done to stop it. Cook Street is right in the middle of the shunting-area at the present time, is it not?—Yes.

What I want to put to you is this: assume you could get, in this neighbourhood of, say, the site of the Gas Company, an area varying from 12 to 14 chains wide by a depth of about 80 chains across, a total of 120 acres, or what it is assumed will be the necessary area, could you not, having acquired that land, and putting aside the question of the cost of the land adjoining the Grand Hotel, and including the purchase of the dwellinghouses in West Street, carrying this down to Kairanga Road and beyond it, and getting an area of 100 to 120 acres—do you mean to say that you could not just as effectually provide all the necessary accommodation and conveniences for working there as you could at Rangitikei Street?—Given an uninterrupted area of certain dimensions at that particular place you could no doubt provide accommodation just as well there as at Rangitikei Street—that is, given an uninterrupted area, remember.

You refer to the difficulty of altering the tracks on the existing line of railway where the work is being done at the present time?—I am referring to a great deal more than that.

That is one of the difficulties?—One of the smaller difficulties.

It is not a serious difficulty?—Yes, it is a serious difficulty, but the greatest difficulty is where the area is riddled with street-crossings and valuable property.

Take the dwellinghouses between West Street and Botanical Road: there are about twenty small dwellinghouses there, are there not?—They are not small.

You think it would take £50,000 to do that?—My dear sir, to take what you are talking about would cost a million to get an uninterrupted area such as you think. It would cost hundreds and hundreds of thousands of pounds to purchase the land alone.

You are quite satisfied of that?—Yes, quite satisfied.

In any case, you will have to make very large improvements in the present station, will you not?—Yes.

And you will have to work there until the new station is constructed?—That is so.

Then those improvements will have to be practically scrapped afterwards?—No.