

50. And it will require practical reconstruction for the purpose of making it suitable for a main trunk line?—Yes.

51. You have assumed also that two new main bridges would be required—one for the Manawatu and one for the Rangitikei?—Yes.

52. Have you considered the question as to whether in any event a new bridge will not be required over the Rangitikei at Kakariki?—I do not think so.

53. You know that the present bridge is both a railway and traffic bridge?—Yes.

54. Do you know that it is causing the gravest inconvenience to the working of the railways?—It causes inconvenience, but I would not say the gravest inconvenience.

55. At all events, you have not taken into consideration the possibility or probability of a new bridge being required across the Rangitikei River?—Let me understand you. Do you mean a new railway-bridge?

56. Yes, a new railway-bridge?—There is no need for a new railway-bridge. We have considered that.

57. If you were going to exclude the public from the traffic-bridge it would mean that the Government would very largely contribute towards the construction of a traffic-bridge?—Why?

58. They generally have to do so because of pressure of public opinion?—Of course, I do not know anything about that.

59. Do you know that the grades between Kakariki and Feilding on the existing line are practically severe?—Some of them are severe, yes.

60. But are they not extremely severe?—Yes. The gradient from Kakariki to Halcombe is 1 in 53, which in a month or two will be 1 in 70.

61. I understand, according to Mr. Hiley's scheme, that the reduction of that grade will cost £50,000?—Oh, no.

62. And we were told in the course of evidence at Palmerston North that that reduction in grade was not being proceeded with?—Well, as a matter of fact, it is practically completed. Then there is the grade beyond Kakariki, what we call the Greatford bank, which I think is 1 in 49: that is to be proceeded with shortly. The total expenditure between Feilding and Marton was estimated to be under £50,000, and the ruling grade would then be 1 in 70.

63. After expenditure of £50,000?—Approximately, £50,000.

64. Has any attempt been made to increase the radius of the curves?—Yes, that is included in the £50,000.

65. Do you know that with the construction of the permanent deviation from Marton to Levin you would have a run from Marton to Paekakariki, distant 70 miles, of 1 in 90 or 1 in 100?—I have heard so. I have no personal knowledge of the scheme at all. I could quite believe that.

66. Would not that be a great advantage both in the load which an engine could take and in the saving of wear-and-tear?—Well, the advantage to be gained has always got to be weighed in connection with any relocation or improvement of gradients. If you have to keep open your existing railway as well as run on the other railway, then it is a very doubtful proposition which will have to be considered in every case as to whether your deviation or your improved grade is going to be worth while.

67. It is a balance of cost and convenience?—Yes.

68. On the one hand you have the expenditure in the construction and increased cost of work, while on the other hand you have the saving of time, and so on, to be placed against it?—Yes.

69. Is not the Railway Department fully alive to the fact that there is a grave and inconvenient congestion of traffic on the section between Marton and Palmerston North—has it been brought to your notice?—Not in those words.

70. Those are my words—perhaps I am “painting the lily”?—I think you are. There is a congestion under certain conditions, which we can alter by increasing the number of crossing-places. That is a matter of comparatively small expense. In order to get rid of certain inconveniences and congestion that existed between two stations on that line there was an additional place put in a little to the north of Feilding—at a place called Maewa—and that has got rid of the congestion and inconvenience you are referring to.

71. That is not an answer to my question. Are there not grave complaints to-day of delays, in live-stock trains, for example?—I have not heard of it. It has not been brought under my notice.

72. I am putting this to you as an expert: do you doubt that in the near future there will be a necessity for a duplication of the line from Marton to Palmerston North, if not to Wellington?—I think it a long way ahead.

73. Others think that a decade will bring the time when that will become a practical necessity?—That, of course, is a matter of opinion. I think it is a long way ahead.

74. Do you know the saving in time that will result—the saving in distance we know is about seventeen miles by the proposed deviation?—I have heard it stated at fifteen miles.

75. You apparently do not know that there was a survey of the eleven miles and a half between Levin and Foxton?—I have never seen the plans.

76. Your total is £405,000 as the actual cost of construction, and about £105,000 for alterations to stations and buildings?—I put the thing roughly at about half a million altogether.

77. I want to ask you about the minor proposition—that is, the suggestion that the Railway Department should permit the tramway to junction at or near Marton with its railway-line. You know that this tramway has been in existence for thirty years?—We will assume that.

78. For thirty years it has been connected with the Government line at Himatangi?—That is so.