

WILLIAM MCKENZIE SWORN and examined. (No. 36.)

1. *Mr. Innes.*] You are, amongst other things, secretary of the Palmerston North Chamber of Commerce?—Yes.

2. You have, as secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, been in communication with the various local bodies with reference to this proposed railway deviation from Levin to Marton?—Yes.

3. The deviation I refer to has nothing to do with the tramway?—No, the deviation of the railway.

4. Are these the various copies of the resolutions that you have received from the various local bodies [produced]?—Yes.

*Mr. Innes:* And they read as follows:—

*Palmerston North Chamber of Commerce.*—“That in view of the number of railways urgently required to open up undeveloped country, the suggestion to construct a line from Levin to Greatford is in the opinion of this Chamber entirely inadvisable.”

*Dannevirke Chamber of Commerce.*—“The Dannevirke Chamber of Commerce desires to lodge an emphatic protest against any deviation of the Main Trunk railway-line that would rob the Hawke's Bay Province and east coast district generally of the convenience of the junction at Palmerston North. The Chamber of Commerce further considers that before any large sum of money is expended on the duplication of existing lines the main arterial lines of the Dominion should be completed, and in this connection would emphasize the disadvantage under which the east coast of the North Island is placed through lack of railway communication.”

*Hastings Chamber of Commerce.*—“Hastings Chamber wishes enter strong protest against this proposal as being entirely opposed to public interest in this district.”

*Napier Chamber of Commerce.*—“This Chamber supports your opposition proposed Levin-Greatford deviation, and strongly of opinion no new lines should be commenced until main lines in course of construction are completed.”

*Pohangina County Council.*—“This Council strongly protest against the deviation of the Main Trunk line via Levin and Greatford. Apart from the inconvenience that will be caused by Palmerston North and Feilding, as well as the east coast, being cut off, the fact remains that the proposed district through which the deviation would go is well served both by tram-line and good roads. And this Council is of opinion that as long as large tracts of country in the North Island remain undeveloped and lack communication either by road or rail, such expenditure as is suggested is absolutely unwarranted.”

*Kiwitea County Council.*—“That this Council emphatically protests against the proposed Levin-Greatford Railway deviation, on the ground that the settlement through which the proposed line would pass is already well served with railway communication. The deviation would be a serious loss to the rapidly rising towns of Palmerston North and Feilding, situated in the most fertile district in the North Island. The deviation would cut off the junction of the Napier and Wairarapa lines, carrying the railway out to the sea-coast through tracts of sand, leaving large areas of rich land in Kimbolton, Apiti, and Rangiwahia districts entirely without railway communication, districts through which a deviation of the Main Trunk line can be obtained to shorten the route from Wellington to Auckland by a greater distance than the proposed one. In the event of a deviation having to be made to shorten the Main Trunk line between Auckland and Wellington at some future date, the Government be urged to make a deviation between Feilding, Kimbolton, Rangiwahia, and Mangaweka. By so doing it would open up a large amount of first-class country.”

*Feilding Borough Council.*—“That this Council protest against the proposed deviation of the Main Trunk Railway between Greatford and Levin, and is of opinion that should the Government contemplate making any deviation in railway such deviation should be made between Feilding and Utiku, via Apiti and Rangiwahia. By so doing the railway will be shortened by several miles, and the development in this inland district, which is one of the best producing districts in New Zealand, would be materially assisted. The Council would also draw the attention of the Government to the fact that the railway from Wellington to Levin skirts the sea-coast, whereas the object of railway should be to tap the interior, and by making the deviation suggested this object will be obtained.”

*Oroua County Council.*—“That this Council enters an emphatic protest against the proposal to deviate the Main Trunk line between Levin and Greatford, and considers that the proposed deviation is a total waste of public expenditure, and against the interests of the community generally.”

*Resolution of Public Meeting at Rangiwahia.*—“That this meeting enters its protest against the proposal to spend public money on a deviation of the Main Trunk Railway between Levin and Greatford, on the ground that the advantages of such a proposal would not be commensurate with the cost; that when public money is available for such a purpose it would be more wisely spent both in the interests of the Dominion and of the locality concerned in opening up the land between Feilding and Utiku, via Apiti and Rangiwahia, by the construction of a line of railway, as it would shorten the distance between Feilding and Utiku, and ensure the further development of the most fertile and best producing districts in the Dominion.”

*Resolution passed by Public Meeting, Apiti.*—“That this meeting of settlers of Apiti and district desires to record an emphatic protest against any deviation of the Main Trunk line from Levin to Greatford as detrimental to the interests of this district, closely settled, containing a huge area of fertile land, and greatly handicapped at present by want of railway facilities, and is of opinion that if any deviation is contemplated it should be run via Kimbolton and Apiti from Feilding to Utiku, thus opening up a closely settled and fertile district; and, further, we protest on the ground of national war policy against any construction of railways along the sea-coast while large and important inland districts are suffering from want of railway facilities.”