

During our visit to Palmerston North we carefully inspected the railway facilities now existing there and observed the working thereof. We also inspected the localities in which it was proposed in evidence that a new railway-station and yards should be constructed. On completion of our sittings at Palmerston North we proceeded by motor-car to Marton, and thence to Levin, via Bull's, Sanson, and Foxton, in order to observe the route of a deviation of the railway-line from Levin to Marton which was brought under our notice in the course of the inquiry.

The first question submitted to us was, as has been stated above, whether the facilities now existing at Palmerston North for the conduct of the business of the Government Railways Department are sufficient and suitable for that purpose. In regard to this question we are of the opinion that the present facilities for the conduct of the railway business at Palmerston North are quite inadequate for that purpose. The operations of the Railway Department can, under present conditions, be carried on only at considerable risk of injury to those engaged therein, while the necessity for frequent shunting across Cook Street and the Square is a source of considerable inconvenience and danger to the public.

The lack of proper and sufficient goods-shed accommodation and standing sidings renders it quite impossible to deal with the goods traffic satisfactorily, thus materially retarding the economic turnover of the rolling-stock, and involving the customers of the Railway Department in inconvenience and loss through being unable to obtain prompt delivery and despatch of their goods. The station-platform accommodation is also insufficient to enable the Department to discharge its functions in the passenger branch efficiently and economically and with due regard to the convenience of the public.

In regard to the second question submitted to us—namely, if such facilities are not sufficient or are not suitable for such purpose, what alterations therein (whether in respect of situation or otherwise howsoever) are necessary and desirable and best adapted to enable the business of the said Department to be carried on with the greatest degree of safety, efficiency, economy, and convenience—we are of opinion that, apart from other considerations, the very great expenditure and the destruction of buildings which would be involved in securing a sufficient area of land to reasonably provide for present and probable future requirements at the site of the present station renders it practically impossible to retain the station on that site.

In the course of the inquiry two schemes for providing the necessary facilities on other sites were submitted to us. The first was that proposed by the Railway Department. This involves a deviation of the present line, commencing at or about Longburn Station, running thence as shown in Plan No. 26453 [Exhibit No. 3] attached hereto, and rejoining the present main line at about the 91½-mile peg (between Terrace End and Bunnythorpe Stations). Under this proposal the location of the railway-station would be on the northern side of Boundary Road, in the vicinity of Rangitikei Road.

The other scheme was that submitted by or on behalf of those who were opposed to that propounded by the Railway Department. Under this second scheme it was proposed to retain the present route through Palmerston North and to construct a new station and yards on a site between the present location and Awapuni Station, as shown on the sketch-plan produced in evidence by Mr. J. E. Fulton [Exhibit No. 10].

We have carefully considered these schemes and the evidence given in respect thereof, and after mature deliberation we have come to the conclusion that the first—namely, that submitted by the Railway Department—should be adopted. In making this recommendation we desire to mention that we are satisfied that it would be possible to construct a properly equipped station, giving the necessary facilities, on the site proposed in the second scheme. It should be noted, however, that the adoption of this scheme would, among other things, involve the destruction of a number of houses, the closing of Cook Street, West Street, and Kairanga Road, and the removal of the passenger-station and goods-shed approximately half a mile farther from the business portion of the town than the present location.

The first scheme would enable all the necessary facilities to be readily provided, and also allow for ample provision being made for all probable future expansion. Its adoption would also eliminate the danger now arising from the numerous level crossings between Longburn and Terrace End Stations, and particularly those at the Square.