

meet the Borough Council, and he met them and discussed that particular question. Of course, in doing so he pointed out that he was anxious to improve matters at Palmerston North.

Are you aware of any report made by Mr. Hiley upon this subject of the railway facilities at Palmerston North?—I have already stated definitely that there is no report made by Mr. Hiley in regard to Palmerston North.

Is the question referred to in any of his reports?—There is a reference to it in the Railways Statement—a special report made in 1914 by Mr. Hiley dealing with a general scheme of improvements, and in that report he made reference to some improvements at Palmerston North. Those improvements were under discussion in 1912, and they are the ones to which I have referred. A sketch-plan was drawn out and involved closing Cook Street.

Is that the sketch-plan that Mr. MacLean has referred to as prepared in 1912?—Yes, that is the plan.

Mr. Field.] Is that the plan that was laid before the Borough Council and the Chamber of Commerce?—As far as I know, that is the only plan, but I am not sure. I was not there; but, at all events, in connection with that I can say that I have made inquiries on more than one occasion from the Engineering Branch, and they know of no other plan.

Mr. Myers.] During Mr. Hiley's time, did the question of a final and definite scheme with regard to Palmerston North come up for settlement?—No. He and I had discussed the matter in a general way, but the Palmerston North work which he had included in the 1914 report was, together with other big works, held up by the war conditions. Therefore the Palmerston North scheme was not further discussed. It was useless to discuss it.

There was a letter or report I read to the Commission the other day, which you produced, dated 8th June, 1920, from yourself to His Worship the Mayor of Palmerston North?—Yes, that is the one dealing with the deviation and the increase in traffic.

Have you discussed this question of the deviation with the authorities in Palmerston?—I discussed the question fully with the Borough Council at Palmerston North.

That is the scheme as set out in Plan No. 26453?—Yes. I discussed it with the Mayor and Councillors. I am not sure whether all the Councillors were present, but the majority were.

With what result?—I found they were unanimously in favour of the scheme, after hearing what I had to say. They considered it was the best scheme that had ever been put before them, and that it was the only scheme that would satisfactorily meet the position.

Are there any other reports that you desire to put in that you think would help the Commission, or any details of traffic?—I would like to hand in for the information of the Commission a report made by myself to the Minister of Railways dated 1st November, 1920. It reads:—

Hon. the Minister of Railways, Wellington.

1st November, 1920.

Railway Improvements, Palmerston North.

THE business to be dealt with daily at Palmerston North has entirely outgrown the facilities of the present station, and it is quite impracticable to provide on the existing site the facilities that are necessary to enable the Department to satisfactorily handle the existing traffic. The result is that serious delays to trains are of almost daily occurrence. The public are subjected to grave inconvenience, and the staff are carrying on under heartbreaking conditions.

It is therefore imperatively necessary that immediate steps be taken to improve matters, and to place the Department in a position that will enable the present and prospective business of the future to be handled with efficiency and economy.

The matter has engaged serious attention for a considerable time, and after giving much thought and making myself personally acquainted with the existing conditions, and watching the operations carefully, I have come to the conclusion that the only satisfactory solution of the difficulty is to remove the station to a new site beyond the limits of the town. The question has been discussed with the Borough Council, and that body heartily approved the proposal.

The present line, as you are no doubt aware, is laid on a portion of the road reserve from Longburn, and runs through the main streets of Palmerston North to Terrace End. It is intersected by several crossings which are a continual source of danger, and traffic in the Square is continually held up by shunting-engines, which have of necessity to foul the Square and the street-crossings every time a shunt is made. Every mixed and goods train which at present arrives at Palmerston North has to be broken up and placed in small sections on different sidings as room can be found. The lack of room at Palmerston North renders it necessary to run shunting-trains to Longburn, Terrace End, or Whakaronga to find standing-room for wagons that cannot be accommodated in Palmerston North station-yard.

The proposal to remove the station involves the deviation of the line from Longburn to Whakaronga, where it will junction with the Napier line.

In the 1914 railway-improvement scheme it was proposed to spend £40,000 at Palmerston North. The position has, however, entirely changed since that time, and quite irrespective of what the decision may be regarding the proposed building of a line from Levin to Marton, respecting which representations have recently been made to you, the removal of the Palmerston North Station cannot be avoided, as the business from Wairarapa, Napier, and Marton portions of the railway, which must always be dealt with at Palmerston North, cannot be handled on the present site.

From the Department's point of view the necessity for carrying out the proposed works at Palmerston North is the most urgent of the important works that have been projected. I therefore strongly urge that the necessary legislation, which has been submitted to you in Bill form, be passed during the present session so that an immediate start may be made on this imperatively essential work.

R. W. MCVILLY,
General Manager.

Is there anything else you wish to produce?—Yes, I have also here a report from Mr. MacLean, Chief Engineer, dated 22nd August, 1919, which reads:—

The General Manager.

Palmerston North Station: Closing of Cook Street: Rearrangement of Station.

As explained to you personally, I have held over a reply to your memorandum until I could lay before you some important suggestions in connection with the position at Palmerston North. It appears to me inadvisable to discuss the closing of Cook Street if any other proposal which does not involve the closing of the street were to be adopted, or, at any rate, until the alternatives could be discussed.