

forward by the Railway Department at the present time. Neither in the United States of America nor in any other part of the world will you find a parallel to the present proposal, nor will you find any place where the railway is taken outside the centre of population. In fact, the tendency is to bring it nearer to the centres. That is the inevitable consequence in all cases. The proposal submitted by the Railway Department, if it is carried into effect, will, apart from its other demerits, have the effect of pushing Palmerston North along Rangitikei Street, and in consequence the value of land in the vicinity of the proposed railway-station will be increased. I may say that enormous prices have already been given in Palmerston North on this speculation for land in the vicinity. It is a fact that numbers of people have been speculating on these proposals.

*Mr. Myers :* You always have that.

*Mr. Luckie :* I will show that a great deal of the interest that lies along Rangitikei Street is responsible for the attitude taken up by the official representatives of Palmerston North. It is within my knowledge that land that was previously purchased at £120 per acre recently changed hands at £360 per acre. The inevitable consequence of shifting the railway-line is to shift the economic centre. That is the history of the development of railways. They have been the greatest promoters of values that the world has ever seen. If you are going to shift the main railway-line at Palmerston North one mile and a half to two miles away from its present position, what is going to happen? If the railway-station is shifted from where it is at the present time it means that the property in the vicinity of the present site is naturally going to decay and reduce in value. It must be borne in mind that a large amount of shopping is done by through passengers who arrive by one train and return by a later one the same day. The result will be the people will do their shopping somewhere else where they are able to return to their homes the same day. I cannot understand how it is that my friend His Worship the Mayor has duped the population of Palmerston North and blinded them in regard to this deviation of the line. It must be recognized that if this deviation were carried out it will mean that the shopkeepers in the neighbourhood of the present station will be ruined, or practically so, to the advantage of the shopkeepers in the vicinity of Rangitikei Street. It is my intention to prove to you by expert testimony that the tendency of every railway in the United States of America and Canada is to acquire more land in the vicinity of the present station sites. Even the Waterloo Station in London has enlarged its yard accommodation by acquiring more land contiguous to its present site. The station was not built outside London when more accommodation was required. If such a scheme is possible in London it is very much simpler in Palmerston North, and according to all economic principles it is what should be done. I may say that it is not from the railway man's point of view I am looking at this matter, but from the point of view of the poor unfortunate people who have their business premises situated near the present station-site. There were five hundred people who signed a round-robin, and it should be before you, and each one from the different households said they were opposed to the removal of the station. I have no hesitation in saying that if the Commission sat for two more days there would be at least five thousand signatures. No doubt my friend Mr. Nash will take up a different attitude. I want to point out to you gentlemen that I have here a plan which has been supplied to me showing the existing railway system in Palmerston North. [Plan produced.] I want to point out that as long ago as 1889 the Railway Department appreciated the importance of making various alterations in the railway-station at Palmerston, and it was not until the year 1919—a period of thirty years—that there was any suggestion made to remove the station to another site. The Railway Department, in order to carry out its various improvements, deemed it necessary to close Cook Street. A Proclamation was issued in the year 1889, but by reason of some defect in the Proclamation it was set aside by the Court of Appeal. In the year 1892 another Proclamation was issued, and it was again set aside by reason of some defect. I may say that as late as 1912 the next Proclamation was issued, but it has not been set aside. It is recognized that it is a good Proclamation, and the Government has not dared to close the road. The Government apparently was satisfied that the increase in the accommodation necessary at Palmerston North could be carried out on its present site, and for this purpose, about ten or twelve years ago the Department purchased the portion of land opposite the goods-shed and in the vicinity of Pitt Street. [Portion of land pointed out on plan by Mr. Luckie.] I am at a loss to know why they purchased that piece of land ten or twelve years ago and have not touched it. I undertake to show the Commissioners four or five old engines that have been drawn up opposite the goods-shed, and I consider it is a clever bit of stage management. However, this is what I want to point out in this connection: that in the year 1912, after the last Proclamation was issued for the closing of Cook Street, the —

*Mr. Myers :* Why do you say that the Government did not dare to do it?

*Mr. Luckie :* Well, as my learned friend objects to the use of the word "dare" I will withdraw it. I was only using the words expressed by a Railway official. I want to find out from the Railway Department what has rendered it necessary to abandon the scheme that was suggested between the years 1914 and 1916, because this was the scheme which Mr. Hiley approved of in his report of 1914, and which involved the closing of Cook Street. For that purpose a Proclamation was issued in 1912, but I do not know what developments have presented themselves since that time. In 1914 Mr. Hiley, the then General Manager of Railways, said that a scheme for the improvement of the station facilities at Palmerston North could be carried out at a cost of £40,000. It is now proposed to increase the accommodation and provide a new station at a very much heavier cost. At a later stage I will prove that the accommodation can be provided at a cost not exceeding £150,000, or at the most £200,000. In West Street there is an area of about 10 acres of land which is undoubtedly suitable for engine-shed accommodation without going outside the general area covered by the railway-station. It is, I suggest, for the Railway Department to indicate to the Commission why the proposals outlined by me should not be carried into effect, and not involve the Dominion