

You handled, did you not, during the recent shortage of flour a larger proportion of the flour than was handled throughout the rest of the North Island?—I would not say that.

More than the rest of the Wellington Province?—No. We handled a very big proportion of the goods used in Palmerston North.

Will you be able to carry on your business there if this loop is made?—It will be quite impossible to carry on our business without a siding. For instance, on one occasion we had a matter of 2,030 tons at one time, and it would have been impossible to have handled that quantity unless we had a railway alongside.

You are called upon to get rid of it in a short time?—Yes, the Department can give us twenty-four hours' notice, but the Department has always been lenient to us.

What would you have to do with your premises if the private siding were taken away from you, and the deviation were carried out?—We could not carry on. It would mean we would be over two miles away from the railway-station.

How far away from the railway-line?—The railway-line must come on this side of the goods-shed. We would have to build on the other side of the goods-shed.

Near the Rangitikei Line?—Yes.

Would you have to scrap your present plant?—It would be useless. It is a very expensive plant to put up. I could give you the cost that would be involved in putting up a modern milling plant to-day. I should estimate that the cost would amount to £20,000.

You estimate it would cost as much as that?—Yes.

In your opinion what would be the effect on business premises generally—those between the present station and where the proposed new station will be constructed on the Rangitikei Line?—I know that in Oamaru, where the station was removed from, the business part, it is practically dead. The merchants have shifted from the vicinity of the old station close to the new station. The same thing that happened in Oamaru would happen in Main Street, Palmerston North, if the proposals which have been submitted by the Railway Department were given effect to.

Do you know whether that is increasing the value of land in the immediate neighbourhood of the station?—No, I could not say.

Well, judging by your experience in Oamaru?—The value near the new railway-station went up and in the vicinity of the old railway went back.

The removal of the station has very materially altered the value of the old portion of the Town of Oamaru?—Yes; some places which were good business places near the old railway-station since removal can only get 5s. per week.

You were in Oamaru for how many years?—A good many years.

You were learning your business there, were you not?—Yes.

The portion of land in the vicinity of the railway-station is going ahead and is prosperous?—Yes.

The other portion is dead as the result of the removal of the railway-station, is it not?—Yes.

Can you see any difference between Palmerston North and Oamaru?—I am quite sure the same thing that happened in Oamaru will happen in Palmerston North.

Palmerston North is more dependent on the railways than Oamaru, is it not?—Yes.

Palmerston North has no waterfront at all?—No. Palmerston North is dependent upon the railways.

The great prosperity of Palmerston North is due to its location?—That is so.

*Mr. Myers.*] I am afraid I did not catch your statement as to how long you have been in Palmerston North?—I have been in Palmerston North for a period of about two years.

How long have you been in the flour-mill at Terrace End?—The mill has been there for forty years.

Has it been operating continuously?—It has gradually improved. It has gone from a one-sack plant to a twelve-sack plant.

Some of the plant is forty years old, is it not?—It is a fairly modern plant—that is, it has fairly modern machinery.

What do you call modern machinery?—We have at the present time over £3,000 worth of machinery being installed. I may say that this machinery was on order before the deviation was talked of.

I think you are looking at this question from the point of view of the Manawatu Mills Company?—Not entirely.

Mainly?—I cannot see that the moving of the station is going to benefit the town. At the present time Palmerston North is considered to be one of the busiest places in New Zealand. I consider the proposal to move the railway-station farther away from the town must increase the cost of living in Palmerston North. The carriage of commodities must make it dearer.

I suppose you can see that the necessities of the case may even now, or shortly, require the removal of the station from its present position?—I do not see that it does. If the railway is maintained in the centre of the town it will continue to be of general benefit, and it is better to have the station in the centre of the town rather than at one end of it.

But supposing you cannot?—With the present high cost of materials and the great shortage of things I think one point the Commission should consider when going into the question is to see whether something could not be done with the present station in the way of improvements.

Supposing it cannot—what have you to say then: are you still going to say that because the Manawatu Mills Company cannot carry on without a siding the site of the station is not to be altered?—I do not go so far as that. Some improvement must be made at the present time. The existing conditions cannot continue.

I am asking you to assume for the moment that the position cannot be improved having regard to the public interest generally, but the necessities of the case require the removal of the station from