

subway provided for vehicular traffic. However, the Borough Council arrived at the decision that Cook Street should be closed in the interests of the town and the country. We asked the Government to take the necessary steps, and if they were not in accord with that suggestion then the Council would do so; but I would like to point out that at that time the war broke out, and the question in regard to the expenditure of money with respect to the railway-station in Palmerston North had to be deferred. This was held over until some few months ago, when the matter was reopened. We could not understand what was the reason for not getting certain information in regard to the closing of Cook Street, but finally the General Manager of Railways, Mr. McVilly, asked us to consult with him and one or two of his officers on a given date in regard to the question of the railway station and yard at Palmerston North. They came up, and the position was put very clearly before us by the General Manager. We then realized that in the interests of Palmerston North and the district as a whole there was only one thing to do, and that it was impossible to carry out any proposal in the way of extensions on the present site. If improvements were carried out at the present site it would only satisfy the requirements for another four or five years, or perhaps ten years at the outside, and then the Department would be in trouble again. I would like to take this opportunity of clearing up one point. In listening to the remarks of Sir James Wilson this afternoon I think I am right in saying that while he had every respect for the General Manager and the Engineers, he thought they had approached this matter from the point of view of Palmerston North and not from the point of view of the Dominion. May I just read an extract from the General Manager's letter, which shows that the Department has taken up the matter from a Dominion point of view, and not, as Sir James Wilson stated, from the point of view of Palmerston North. It is as follows: "The main point for consideration in the interests of the Dominion, your town, and the Department is the solution of the difficulties and the provision of facilities that will provide not only for the moment but for the future requirements of a large and rapidly growing railway traffic. This problem has engaged the serious attention of the Department . . ." I merely mention that to show that this matter had been considered from a Dominion point of view. Now, sir, in connection with the growth of the railways, we find that over a period of twenty years the passenger traffic in Palmerston North has increased by over 300 per cent.; live-stock, 600 per cent.; timber, 600 per cent., and so on. I want also to say this, sir: that when we realize that the number of wagons arriving here averages fifteen hundred to two thousand every day it must be recognized by everybody that something had to be done to overcome the existing difficulty. Unless something is done it will be impossible to carry on under existing conditions. At times, if one were to go down to the railway-station it would be seen that two trains arrive together, and other trains are held up outside the precincts of the station and cannot get in. That is a common occurrence. When we come to the question of the goods traffic we find that the Department actually have to send train-loads of goods down to Awapuni, situated two miles distant, and also to Longburn Station, a distance of four miles, in order to overcome the congestion at the station. Why, it was only the other day, when a lot of trucks were standing at Awapuni, that a case of goods was stolen which was worth something between £400 and £500. As I have already intimated, it will be impossible for the Department to carry on under the existing conditions. And, sir, there is another very important factor to be taken into consideration, and that is, for some time past the lives of men working in the station-yards have not been safe. As is well known, men have been killed there; and can you wonder at it? The handling of stock is giving a great deal of trouble. At the present time stock has to be driven into the yards at night and placed in the trucks so as it may be taken away in the early morning. I do want to stress this point, sir: that owing to the shunting operations of the Department—and they cannot help it—numerous complaints have been made about the matter. As a matter of fact you will find people in the Square blocked at the level crossing, and there they have to wait until the train shifts. That has been a great nuisance so far as the citizens of this town are concerned. We want the tramway service for this city, but there can be no question about it that a tramway service cannot be installed until we have been relieved of the railway-crossings. It has been said that a subway should commence from the town so that trains would not go through the main thoroughfares. To-day I heard one witness say that the line should be built up and that it was just a simple matter to do that. At the present time it is impossible for a good many of the trains to get up with their loads on to the top at the other end of the town, and it is quite a common thing for a train to get half-way to the top and have to go back towards the town and make a fresh start. I have seen that happen on numerous occasions. That is the sort of thing that is going on under existing conditions. The question with respect to the distance of the new site has been raised more than once, but the conditions will be far better and there will be more room, and the Council hopes, with the assistance of the Railway Department, to make a proper entrance to the new railway-station when it is erected. So far as the business people are concerned I want to stress this point: Evidence given to the Commission to-day was to lead you away with the idea—I do not suggest that that can be done for a moment—that the business people in Palmerston North would be put to a great deal of inconvenience because of the removal of the railway. I want to say this, sir: that for years past Rangitikei Street has been recognized as the home of the merchants. There all the big business premises have been erected, and there are no business men from the merchants' point of view that I know of in the vicinity of the present railway-station. Therefore the removal of the railway is going to be an advantage to the business men in Palmerston North, and that is why they are hotly supporting the proposal. I would like to say also, sir, that the trains running through the centre of the town are a source of danger. It is not very long ago that a man was killed on the level crossing. As a matter of fact, I saw a man cut to pieces at the level crossing in the Square. There have been numerous deaths on the railway-line. I submit that, in the interests of the town, the business people, and the Railway Department,