

I suppose you have watched the growth of Palmerston North for a number of years?—For the past thirty-six years.

I suppose Palmerston North has a fine back country, and a good deal of its prosperity is due to its being the railway centre for the North Island?—The railway has assisted it, but Palmerston North being an agricultural district has made it what it is to-day.

What is the difference between Feilding and Palmerston North?—Feilding is too close to Palmerston North, unfortunately for Feilding. Palmerston North is the centre.

Is it not a fact that Palmerston North owes its supremacy by reason of its being the centre of four systems of railway?—The bulk of it is due to Palmerston North being an agricultural centre.

Are you not aware that the natural consequence of removing a railway-station is to move the economic centre? That has already been done in Hamilton and in Oamaru?—The circumstances are different in Palmerston North, because the trend of building from a business point of view for years now has been going right out where the railway is to be moved.

If the railway-station is moved that must increase the value of land round the railway-station?—The trend of building has gone where the railway is proposed to be built.

Necessarily a great deal more of it must go there when the main central railway-station is going to be put one mile and a half to the west?—I do not agree with you. I think, with the up-to-date tram service we hope to have in Palmerston North, the people, irrespective of that sort of thing, will make for the centre.

You know as a matter of fact that the building of railways away from the townships has been the means of not assisting the towns to progress?—Take, for instance, Masterton: that place is going ahead.

At any rate, you say that some of that land fronting Main Street would be worth £80 per foot and some of the other £5?—I do not agree with that.

That land will go back in price when the railway leaves it?—I do not agree with you.

Mr. Marchbanks.] In connection with Mr. Hiley's scheme put before the Council, do I understand that it provided entirely for the closing of Cook Street?—Yes, sir. We did not have any set of plans handed to the Council.

There were no plans before the Borough Council, and the proposal dealt with the closing of Cook Street?—Yes. They said, "You agree with the closing of Cook Street," and intimated that it would be impossible to do anything unless they closed Cook Street.

The Commission adjourned at 10 p.m. until 11 a.m. next day.

PALMERSTON NORTH, THURSDAY, 10TH MARCH, 1921.

The Commission resumed at 11 a.m. on Thursday, 10th March, in the Magistrate's Court at Palmerston North.

GEORGE JOSEPH HARFORD sworn and examined.

Mr. Myers.] You are Mayor of Feilding, are you not?—Yes.

How long have you held that position?—I have been Mayor for two years.

You are aware that there are two main questions involved in the consideration of this Commission; one is the question of railway facilities at Palmerston North, and the other is the question of the Levin-Greatford deviation?—Yes.

You desire to say something, I think, on both these points?—I desire to say very little in regard to the deviation near Palmerston North. I think that is a question more for the Palmerston North people.

Has that question been a subject-matter of consideration by your Council?—Yes.

I mean the question of the facilities at Palmerston North?—Yes, it has been discussed in the Council, but more so the question of the deviation.

You mean the Levin-Greatford deviation?—Yes.

So far as the facilities at Palmerston North are concerned, are those facilities approved by your Council, or does your Council leave it an open question for Palmerston North?—We certainly believe that in the interests of the public the deviation would be the proper course to adopt.

That is, the Palmerston North deviation?—Yes. We think the level crossings are a curse to New Zealand, and if some of them could be done away with a great improvement would be effected.

I suppose you people in Feilding have not a correct knowledge of the requirements of the station at Palmerston North?—We only know at the present time that it is unworkable and very congested.

I suppose we may take it that so far as Feilding is concerned, whatever is considered to be in the public interest so far as the railway facilities at Palmerston North are concerned, Feilding would be satisfied?—Perfectly satisfied.

Now, with regard to the Levin-Geatford deviation, I think you desire to say a word or two in connection with that matter?—Yes. This question has frequently come before our Chamber of Commerce as well as our Borough Council meetings. In our attitude towards the question we thought it was so far out of the range of practical politics that we did not enter into the question for a moment. We do not think that any Government in possession of its right senses would take a railway through swamp land and sandhills through which the Levin-Greatford deviation would have to pass. About thirty years ago there was another deviation that was recommended, and a Commission was set up to advise as to its suitability: that was the Feilding-Mangaweka deviation.