

I think that deviation was referred to by the Commission set up in 1916 and presided over by the Chief Justice?—I believe it was referred to. In connection with the Commission which I have mentioned there is one point which has not been clearly understood. The Hon. Mr. Bryce, who was a member of that Commission, owned something like 300 acres of land situated near Kimbolton, and because he owned that land he would not vote upon the question at all.

Do you know of any alteration in the circumstances that has arisen since the year 1916 so far as concerns the suggestion of the Levin-Greatford deviation?—The alteration so far as Feilding is concerned has been this: that the weekly stock-sales, as well as the ram and ewe fairs, are now largely attended by people from the Main Trunk line. The facilities that are provided on the Main Trunk line suit both parties—that is to say, those desirous of attending the sales can arrive in the morning and are able to return home the same night. If the deviation were carried out it would entail a lot of travelling for people and put them to a lot of trouble, and it would also mitigate against the welfare of Feilding.

To that extent the position has altered since 1916 not in favour of the suggestion of the Levin-Marton deviation, but against it?—Decidedly against it.

Is there anything else you want to say?—No, except to say that I was in the room when Sir James Wilson was giving his evidence. He said something to the effect that the Railway Department was no alone to be considered in this matter, but that the public should have a say, as the railway was for their convenience. Mention was made that when you come to consider the district between Levin and Marton there are about 34,500 people. Out of that 34,500 people there are only 4,000 people in the Manawatu County, and I believe a good many of them are now in Feilding. I think it was the best argument that was used for retaining the present line that Sir James Wilson could use.

*Mr. Luckie.*] With reference to the proposed deviation of the railway round Palmerston North, has that ever been discussed by your Council?—Yes, that matter has been discussed by the Borough Council.

Did the Council ever pass a resolution about it?—No, it was an informal discussion. We felt that it was not in our interests to interfere with Palmerston North in any way.

It is a matter in which you are entirely indifferent?—I could not say “indifferent.”

It does not matter to you so long as the facilities for the carriage of goods are maintained—it is a matter of indifference to you whether the present station is maintained or a new station is to be constructed?—Certainly; it does not matter to us one way or the other.

I think you said something to the effect that if the Government approved of the Levin-Greatford deviation it would mean that the railway would have to pass over a lot of swamp land: do you know that land?—Yes.

For how many years?—I have known it for the last thirty years.

Is it a correct definition to call it swamp land?—A good bit of it is.

Is not the great bulk of it very fine land?—You have to recollect that on one side of it is the sea.

You are only speaking about a very small portion of that land: where is the swamp land and sandhills?—Only a few months ago I had occasion to come home that way—that is from Levin via Foxton—and I had to turn back.

Is it not totally incorrect to give the impression that the bulk of this land is not good land? Is there not some forty or forty-five miles of good land through which the railway would have to run?—No, not to my mind.

How much of it is good land?—I have not measured it.

Would there be five or ten miles?—You know better than I do.

I am beginning to think I do. When you make a general statement like you have done one comes to the conclusion that you do not know very much about it. You say you have stock-sales in Feilding?—Yes.

Would you object to Marton being the headquarters of those stock-sales instead of Feilding?—I have never given it a thought.

Marton would benefit at the expense of Feilding if that were done?—Certainly not. Feilding is too rich a district to be effected by a change.

What possible harm could this change do Feilding?—As I have said, Feilding would not suffer; but the people who send their stock to the sales in Feilding would find a great deal of difference if a change were made. At the present time, as I have already stated, the people attending the stock-sales arrive by the early morning train and leave for home again in the evening.

If Marton were made the headquarters of the stock-sales it would mean that the stock which was handled and sold at Feilding would be handled and sold at Marton?—I do not think so.

Why?—The difficulty is getting the sales there.

As a matter of fact you know perfectly well that the question of the Levin-Greatford Railway has other bearings, such as the benefit to long-distance passengers, for instance—it would shorten the service on the line north of Marton and south of Levin, would it not?—Yes.

It shortens the route by about fifteen miles to seventeen miles, does it not?—I believe it does.

Would it not be in the public interest to shorten the journey so far as passengers, stock, and other goods are concerned?—Not if you have to pay £1,000,000 for your railway.

I mean apart from all that—would not that be an advantage to the travelling public?—What section of the public do you mean?

That section of the public that has to travel between stations north of Marton and south of Levin?—There are very few people among the travelling public that would worry about that.

It would be an advantage to them, would it not?—You might think so.

You do not think so?—No.