

What do you know about the country in the vicinity of the Levin-Marton deviation?—I know a good deal about the country.

You have admitted that I know more about it than you do?—I said you ought to know.

Is there not a lot of fine land that would be opened if this line were adopted—there is Foxton on the one hand and Foxton to Levin on the other?—Nothing to compare with the land on the Main Trunk line.

Is it not a fact that there is a lot of wheat-growing country there?—I am not a farmer, Mr. Luckie.

You are in favour of the Kiwitea loop, are you not—that was the other alternative route referred to before the previous Commission?—No, I was not in favour of it, because I did not happen to be in the district at that time. I have only been in the district for twenty-eight years.

It was discussed five years ago: are you in favour of it?—Yes, if it was opened up it would make available a vast quantity of territory, and it would also shorten the through distance.

JACK HOWARD VINCENT sworn and examined.

*Mr. Myers.*] What is your official position?—I am the representative of the Oroua County Council.

And you have been directed by your Council to make certain representations to the Commission?—Yes.

Will you please indicate to the Commission what those representations are?—I was directed at the Council meeting yesterday to appear before the Commission and emphatically protest against the proposed Levin-Greatford deviation, on the grounds that the advantages (if any) of the deviation would not in any way be a fair recompense for the tremendous amount of money that the construction would cost; and, taking into consideration the financial stringency at the present time, the Council is of the opinion that the money would be far better expended in works of a more urgent kind, such as the installation of hydro-electricity, which would, in the opinion of the Council, be of more use to the Dominion than any quantity of Levin-Greatford deviations. As far as the other question is concerned, which appears to be a most vital question so far as Palmerston North is concerned, my Council has not very much interest in the matter, sir. That is a matter for the people of Palmerston North, the Government, and the Railway Department to settle. My Council is not very much interested in the matter of whether the railway-station is still confined between advertising hoardings and a line of disused engines, or whether the station is removed down the Rangitikei Line.

You are interested, as we all are, to secure the best facilities available?—Yes, the best facilities should be taken into consideration.

*Mr. Luckie.*] You live at Ashhurst?—Yes.

You are a member of the Oroua County Council?—Yes.

What is the district covered by the County Council?—It extends from the Ruahine Range at the back of Ashhurst to the Rangitikei River.

How would the actual distance affect you and the people you represent—I mean, if the Levin-Greatford deviation were carried out?—It would not affect us personally in any way.

It would not affect your district in any way?—No, I do not think it would affect a large portion of the Oroua County.

So far as you are concerned it does not matter whether such a deviation is made or not?—As already stated, the expenditure of £1,000,000 on that deviation at the present time is not, in the opinion of my Council, warranted.

The assumption is that it is going to cost £1,000,000, but you have not been told that it is?—I believe there has been some evidence to that effect.

*Mr. Luckie:* Not yet, of any value.

*Mr. Myers:* My learned friend is totally incorrect, because there has been some evidence given in regard to that matter. What Mr. MacLean said, sir, was that Mr. Holmes in 1916 intimated that it would cost £10,000 to £12,000 per mile, and he (Mr. MacLean) said that if that were so, and he accepted his estimate, it would cost anything up to £1,000,000 to construct fifty miles of the railway between Levin and Marton.

*Mr. Luckie:* That was an interjection.

*Mr. Myers:* That evidence was given by Mr. MacLean in Wellington.

*Mr. Luckie:* It was never intended to ask this Commission to report in favour of that route. Now is not a suitable opportunity for the expenditure of such a sum of money.

*Mr. Myers:* If you say it is not warranted it will save a lot of time.

*Mr. Luckie (to witness).]* You referred to the financial stringency at the present time: do you think in view of those circumstances it is advisable to incur a very heavy expense immediately?—I do not suggest that at all.

LACHLAN THOMSON McLEAN sworn and examined.

*Mr. Myers.]* You are Chairman of the Kiwitea County Council?—Yes.

I understand from you that you are deputed by your Council to attend before this Commission and express the views of that body in regard to one or both of the matters in which this Commission has been asked to inquire into?—Yes, we discussed the matter at the Council meeting.

Will you please communicate those views?—The Council I represent is very much against the Levin-Greatford deviation. The Council thinks it would be a very bad thing for the district, because it would be cutting off the main line from a very prosperous district. The only advantage the Council