

west coast, going out to the Wairarapa line and the Napier line?—You might say that half the traffic for the east coast comes from the north.

You say that about 1,400 trucks are handled every day from the north for the east coast?—I could get those figures.

And also from the Wairarapa side coming into Palmerston North and going north?—I will also get that information. As far as the passenger traffic is concerned, about half the volume of traffic which passes along the line goes from Palmerston North or comes into Palmerston North. I think you will find that the goods traffic is somewhat similar.

ERNEST HUGH CRABB sworn and examined.

*Mr. Myers.*] What is your profession or occupation here?—I am a grain-merchant.

You are also a member of the Borough Council?—Yes.

And you are the senior member of the Council?—Yes.

That is the Palmerston North Borough Council?—Yes.

You heard the evidence given by His Worship the Mayor?—Yes.

Do you concur with the evidence he gave?—Yes.

I think you desire to state certain matters yourself to the Commission?—Yes.

You have a note of the various matters on which you desire to inform the Commission?—I have been appointed by the Borough Council to give evidence from the Council's point of view in favour of the proposal submitted by the Railway Department. When the matter came before the Council it was in answer to an inquiry from the Council as to the reason why Cook Street had not been closed, and the alterations made in the yards which were originally proposed and which were urgently required. The proposals of the Department came as an absolute surprise to the Council, but we considered it was primarily a matter that affected the welfare of the Dominion through its Railway Department, and as such, of course, it was for us to forgo any local feeling that we might have in the matter. When we came to look into the matter we were favourably impressed with the proposals that had been submitted to us. We considered the present position a great drawback to the welfare of the town as a whole, and we desired to see an improvement effected. I may say that we have made repeated applications to the Department with regard to the danger caused by the trains running through the Main Street. I have lived in Palmerston North for eleven years and during that time I can recollect about seven fatal accidents over a portion of the line affected by the deviation. We have also made repeated applications to the Government with regard to the loss and inconvenience suffered to the town, and also with regard to the insufficient accommodation at the station, and we welcomed the opportunity of getting rid of what we considered to be both a menace to the welfare of the inhabitants and an increasing drawback to the welfare of the town itself. With regard to the best methods of dealing with the present disastrous congestion, we consider, of course, that that is a matter for the Railway Engineers and the General Manager who, after all, are responsible for the railways of this Dominion. It was distinctly understood that the proposal submitted by the Department was the only solution of the problem, and therefore we considered that that settled the question entirely, and we were justified in leaving the matter in the hands of men who have made a life-long study of the problem. I would like to point out that the present position from the point of view of the borough can best be described as disastrous. Through the long delay over this matter I estimate that the financial loss to the Council will be not less than the sum of £7,000 to £10,000. We were just on the point of doubling our gasworks, and for that matter the excavations had started. I may say that machinery is continually arriving, and at the present time we have upwards of £40,000 of machinery lying round. The gasworks are overloaded, and they are on the point of breakdown. We cannot extend or provide the necessary facilities for the town because of the present position and delay in regard to the deviation question. If the deviation question is finally settled upon we must move our gasworks to a point somewhere in the vicinity of the proposed station, and until that question is settled we are unable to do anything. I may say that we have contracts held up at considerable expense at Home, and the materials must arrive a long time before we are able to provide a building for them. I want to bring under the notice of the Commission that this matter should be settled definitely. I consider that most of the objections raised to the scheme submitted by the Railway Department are puerile and "piffling." I have never heard serious men raising such foolish objections as some of them are raising to-day. I want to say on behalf of the Council that when we considered this matter we sympathized with some of the people who are going to lose through the alterations. I have listened to their evidence, and I would ask if there is any means of compensating them that the matter should be considered. I may say that the flooding at the site of the proposed new station is very largely due to the overflow from the Kawau drain, and I may say that the Council at the present time is engaged in straightening the drain. I presume the engineers looked into that matter before recommending the scheme. With regard to the swamp that has been spoken of, I desire to say that there is not a bit of that country there that has not a clay bottom. There is one other matter I think should be taken into consideration, and that is the duplication of the line. In a comparatively short period it will be necessary to duplicate some of these lines, and if another duplicated line is to go through the town, then you will have to close Main Street or it will be a death-trap.

*Mr. Luckie.* You have said something about the reduction in values. You have in the ordinary course of events seen the growth of Palmerston North for many years—it must go towards the railway?—I do not agree with that.

You know that large prices have been paid for land in the neighbourhood of the proposed station?—Yes.