

they are forgetting their own interests in order to help the Palmerston North Borough Council to secure a railway that will give satisfaction to the community. I desire to hand in this petition. [Exhibit No. 7.]

There are 237 signatures, are there not?—Yes. I may say that I have had that purged, and I find that there are seven signatories who are not business men.

I think one or two of the persons who signed themselves as farmers are really business men?—Yes.

May we take it that 230 out of those 237 names are *bona fide* business men, or firms recognized as carrying on business in Palmerston North?—Yes.

Can you say whether they represent the bulk of the business interests in Palmerston North?—Yes. We submitted the petition for signature on Monday at 11 o'clock, and the petition was returned again on Tuesday at 11 o'clock.

The whole of the signatures appearing on the petition were secured without any difficulty and within twenty-four hours?—That is so.

Do you desire to say anything about the Levin—Greatford Railway?—No.

*Mr. Oram.*] It has been suggested in a previous examination that the majority of the people who signed the petition have businesses in or about Rangitikei Street: are you in a position to say whether or not that is correct?—That is not correct. The petition was taken round the Square, to Terrace End, and all over the town.

There was another suggestion made, and that was that practically all the signatories were merely leaseholders, or tenants?—That is wrong, because we have all the largest firms in the town on the petition, and they are all freehold properties.

*Mr. Luckie.*] Are there not a large number of leaseholders?—There may be some, perhaps.

The bulk of those people who have business premises in Main Street and the Square, are they not mostly leaseholders and tenants?—I should not say so.

You have, too, the small shopkeepers?—We have the large shopkeepers.

For how many years have you been in Palmerston North?—For twenty years.

You know whether or not the great bulk of those people are tenants or owners of land?—No, I do not.

If a large number who are shown there are tenants, you are not prepared to deny it?—No.

Do you say that the shunting could not be done even if they went farther south than they propose to do now without going up to Princess Street?—I did not say that. I said that if the station is enlarged it would practically mean closing at intervals the whole of the public thoroughfare from West Street to Princess Street.

That is a matter of expert opinion?—No.

The Commission adjourned till 2 p.m.

On resuming at 2 p.m.,—

JOHN MOORE JOHNSTON sworn and examined.

*Mr. Myers.*] You live in Palmerston North?—Yes.

You have been in Palmerston North for a long time?—Yes.

For how many years?—About thirty-five years.

You are a land agent in Palmerston North, but amongst your activities I think you are honorary treasurer of the Agricultural and Pastoral Association?—Yes.

And also secretary of the Manawatu Racing Club?—Yes.

You are here to speak as a delegate from those two bodies and also to give your own views?—Yes.

First of all, supposing the railway-station is shifted entirely, as suggested by the Railway Department, how will that affect the Racing Club?—If I may be permitted I would like to read to the Commission the views of the committee both of the Racing Club and the Agricultural and Pastoral Association. The following refers to the Manawatu Agricultural and Pastoral Association: "The grounds of the association are at present situated 12 chains from the present railway-station, and when the proposed new station is made the distance will be about 50 chains from the nearest point to the back of the grounds. The committee considered the proposal and came to the conclusion, notwithstanding the increased distance from the railway-station to the grounds, that the proposal of the Railway Department is in the best interest of the town and district, and would give much better facilities to the stockowners and the public. The association has a membership of over 2,200." Then, the undermentioned refers to the Manawatu Racing Club: "The Awapuni course is situated two and a half miles from Palmerston North and two miles from Longburn. A mile and a half from Longburn, at Awapuni Railway-station, the club put in a railway-siding about half a mile in length right on to the course, at their own expense, and costing a considerable sum of money—about £6,000—which enables them to land the public at the lawn-gates. The proposals of the Railway Department for the removal of the present railway-station to the new site will increase the distance to Awapuni by about a mile, and do away with the siding being used from Palmerston North. The committee went fully into the matter, and, though they will be at considerable disadvantage by the change, they are of opinion the proposals of the Railway Department are very necessary and in the best interests of the Dominion and this district."

Is that the considered opinion of the responsible officers of the Manawatu Agricultural and Pastoral Association and the Manawatu Racing Club?—Yes, the committee of the Racing Club and the committee of the Agricultural and Pastoral Association.

And these bodies have come to the conclusion, although from one point of view their own interests may suffer, that in the interests of the district and the Dominion as a whole this change