

On the evidence brought before us it would appear that to provide equal accommodation the first scheme might cost from £100,000 to £150,000 more than the second, but after an exhaustive examination of the two schemes in all their bearings, and having regard to the necessity for making adequate provision for the future, we think that the interests of the public generally would ultimately be better served by the adoption of the first scheme.

In reply to the second question submitted to us, therefore, we have to report that we are of opinion that the proposals submitted by the Railway Department, as indicated in sketch-plan numbered 26453, are necessary, and desirable, and best adapted to enable the business of the Department to be carried on with the greatest degree of safety, efficiency, economy, and convenience.

We also wish to express our opinion that it is highly desirable that a decision as to the future location of the railway-station at Palmerston North be come to as soon as possible, and that the necessary land be acquired promptly thereafter.

We feel constrained also to draw Your Excellency's attention to that portion of the evidence of the General Manager of Railways wherein he stated that the position in regard to railway facilities at Palmerston North was so serious that unless it was taken in hand almost immediately the Department would, in the very near future, be unable to carry on its business with satisfaction to itself, to the public, or to the Government. From the evidence given before us and from our own observations we have been much impressed by the accuracy of this statement, and we think that if the position forecasted by the General Manager is to be avoided it is essential that some temporary relief be at once afforded at the present site.

In regard to the third question submitted to us—namely, whether it is desirable and expedient, and warranted in and by the public interest, that any deviation of the Wellington—New Plymouth Railway should be made between Paekakariki and Marton, and, if so, between what points such deviation should be made—we have to inform Your Excellency that the only such deviation suggested to us was one from Levin to Marton, via Foxton, Sanson, and Bull's. It was, however, admitted by those who represented this matter to us that the work was not one which could be expected to be undertaken in the immediate future, and in this we concur.

We are of opinion, therefore, that it is not desirable, or expedient, or warranted in or by the public interest that any deviation of the Wellington—New Plymouth Railway should be made at present between Paekakariki and Marton.

All which we respectfully submit.

We have the honour to be Your Excellency's obedient servants,

W. M. HANNAY.
J. MARCHBANKS.
A. H. MILES.

Wellington, 22nd April, 1921.
