

*The Chairman* : You will excuse me if I say that perhaps this matter should come up later. As far as submitting evidence to the Commission is concerned, we can arrange with you as to a suitable date without any difficulty at all. At present we are just commencing on our inquiry with regard to the alterations at Palmerston North, and perhaps it would be better if the other matter was left over in the meantime.

*Sir James Wilson* : I was not giving evidence, but only sketching to the Commission what is likely to be brought forward.

*The Chairman* : We will meet in Palmerston North on Wednesday specially for the purpose of going into the question of the Palmerston North Railway-station site, but it is quite likely that we will be able to take any evidence, if it is tendered, in connection with the Paekakariki to Marton deviation.

*Sir James Wilson* : Even then there would be only five days.

*The Chairman* : I was going to add that as far as I know the mind of the Commission we would not shut out any evidence which may be tendered at Palmerston North, and we would be willing later on to take evidence at Wellington if it was considered advisable. I think you may rest assured that, as far as the Commission is concerned, any one who desires to give evidence in connection with the question of the deviation of the Main Trunk line will receive the fullest consideration from the Commission.

*Sir James Wilson* : May I ask another question? Are those who are interested in the question of the deviation entitled to some information from the Railway Department as to the cost of the scheme proposed by Mr. Hiley? Will that be placed before us?

*The Chairman* : I could not say.

*Sir James Wilson* : We suggest that it ought to be placed before the Commission. It ought to be public property, and we suggest that the public who are interested in this matter should have access to that report—I mean the report in connection with the reorganization of the Palmerston North yards.

*The Chairman* : I suppose we will get any reports that have been made to the Government or to the Department.

*Sir James Wilson* : It is not confidential. What I suggest to the Commission is that we should have access to it in order to have some idea of what the cost will be.

*The Chairman* : We will consider that.

*Mr. Marchbanks* : I take it it will be given in evidence and possibly published.

*Sir James Wilson* : If that is so, then we claim that we have a right to know what Mr. Hiley's scheme was that was proposed a few years ago.

*Mr. Miles* : Have you ever applied for the information from the Railway Department?

*Sir James Wilson* : Yes, it has been applied for, but I will leave that to Mr. Field to deal with, because it was he who applied for the information.

*Mr. Field* : May I explain, Mr. Chairman—

*The Chairman* : I do not want to stop you, Mr. Field, but I think it would be in the interests of the Commission and the inquiry if you allowed us to go on with that portion of the matter that we are now dealing with. We will not be deciding yet on any of the matters that have been referred to us by the order of reference. When you come before us you will have the right to bring forward any evidence in regard to the Levin-Greatford deviation, and then that matter will be threshed out.

*Sir James Wilson* : That is the vital point, that you have evidence to show that this matter has been dealt with by the recent General Manager of Railways, and he placed certain statements before the Borough Council in Palmerston North as to what reorganization would be required, and the cost of same. That is vital so far as we are concerned.

*The Chairman* : No doubt we will get that.

*Sir James Wilson* : I only desired to draw the attention of the Commission to that point. Mr. Miles asked me if I had personally applied for the information. I say no, but it has been applied for by Mr. Field, and we have not got it.

*Mr. Field* : I shall be very brief, Mr. Chairman, but I wish to supplement the remarks made by Sir James Wilson. It depends very largely upon the answer you make to me whether we can get along with our evidence or not. It was not until 11 o'clock last night that I knew the Commission was sitting this morning, and we have been unable to obtain any information whatever from the Railway Department to assist us in preparing our evidence. It is quite true that we have got ample evidence in reference to the question of the Levin-Greatford deviation similar to that given in 1916, and we have more evidence now almost readily available; but we did not know until two or three days ago that the scope of the Commission was to be enlarged to include this question. It was only as a result of extreme pressure that we are able to have it brought within the scope or order of reference of the Commission. We want to tender evidence not only with regard to the proposed Levin-Foxton-Marton deviation, but we want to tender evidence to counter the proposals which are now being made by the Department. In the Bill of last year the schedule provides for an authorization of about eight and a half to nine miles of a deviation in the railway round the town of Palmerston North. We are informed that that is going to cost a large amount of money. With a view to preparing for this Commission, which we knew long ago was going to be set up, we desired the information which the Railway Department was able to afford us in regard to the proposed deviation around Palmerston North, and we want also information concerning Mr. Hiley's proposal for relieving the congestion which was made in 1914. All we had concerning this proposal was contained in D.-2 of 1914. We know it is stated that Mr. Hiley recognized that a new railway-station ought to be built at Palmerston North, and that the railway-yards be reorganized at an estimated cost of £40,000, the work to be completed in two years. We have done our best to obtain that information. I should mention that