

The Chairman : So you will have.

Mr. Field : We want to save the Commissioners' time, too.

The Chairman : You need not worry about that.

Mr. Field : The position is that I am placed at a decided disadvantage. I feel inclined to send for Mr. Holmes and Mr. Fulton to come up here and listen to Mr. MacLean's evidence, but the difficulty is that I cannot get Mr. Fulton because I believe he is away. If the Commission proposes to go on with the taking of evidence I would ask to be allowed to get Mr. Fulton here to listen to that evidence, and I will at once communicate with the league with which I am connected, and the body of gentlemen who are interested in the matter, and ask them to empower me to instruct counsel in the matter. If I had known a few days ago that this Commission was going to sit and that the question of the deviation was being included ———

Mr. Myers : You were advised on the 24th February, Mr. Field, by the Prime Minister that instructions had been given for the extension of the scope of the Commission.

Mr. Field : Yes, but we did not know that the Commission was going to sit so soon. That is only a week ago. We have not had any time. We had our meeting at Foxton on Monday last, and this is only Friday. It is impossible for a man to do everything in five minutes. I strongly urge that the Commission should not proceed too far without allowing us the opportunity of, at any rate, instructing counsel and getting our witnesses together. I will send for Mr. Fulton at once and see if I can get him.

The Chairman : After considering the matter the Commissioners are of opinion that we can adjourn the inquiry till Monday morning to give you that opportunity.

Mr. Field : That will be of very great help to us.

The Chairman : That will not affect our arrangement to sit at Palmerston North on Wednesday. In any case, if there is any evidence which you have not got ready for Wednesday you can call it at a later date. Sir James Wilson seemed to be alarmed because he thought he would not have the opportunity of bringing his evidence before the Commission. There is no question about that; we want to hear all the evidence necessary.

Mr. Miles : On our return from Palmerston North, Mr. Field, you will have every facility to enable you to put your case before the Commission.

Mr. Field : The main point is that our witnesses will not have before them the proposals of the Government.

The Chairman : Well, the Commission agrees to adjourn till Monday morning at 11 o'clock.

Mr. Field : That will be of great assistance.

The Commission adjourned till 11 a.m. on Monday, 7th March, 1921.

WELLINGTON, MONDAY, 7TH MARCH, 1921.

Mr. Field : I desire to say, Mr. Chairman, that Mr. Luckie has been instructed to act as counsel in this matter, but at present he is engaged at the Supreme Court and cannot be present for a few minutes. Possibly Mr. Myers can proceed with his address.

Mr. Myers : I do not think it necessary to take up the time of the Commission in making an address. I have already explained to the Commission what the questions are and how they arise. It will save the time of the Commission if I proceed at once to call Mr. MacLean.

FRANCIS WILLIAM MACLEAN sworn and examined.

Mr. Myers.] You are the Chief Engineer of the New Zealand Railways?—Yes.

A position which you have held for a number of years?—Yes, for five years.

Prior to your holding that position, were you Chief Assistant to the Chief Engineer?—I was Inspecting Engineer.

For how long?—Practically for eight years.

And prior to that I think you were in the service of the Railway Department for a number of years?—First I was Assistant Engineer and then District Engineer.

The whole length of your service in the Department being what?—Thirty-six years and a half.

Would it be fair and correct to say that during the time you have been Chief Engineer the question of railway-station facilities at Palmerston North has given you cause for grave and anxious consideration?—That is so.

Are you able to say whether the question arose even before you became Chief Engineer?—It did. It has been a question in the minds of the officers of the Railway Department for the last thirty-odd years.

Do you mean that the Engineers of the Railway Department have foreseen the necessity for some alteration?—Not only the Engineers, but the Railway Commissioners, the General Manager, and all those who had any connection with the business.

Is the difficulty one that has increased as time has gone along?—Very much so.

Would you mind indicating first of all in quite a general way the reasons that have given rise to this trouble, and the reasons for making alterations?—From its geographical position in regard to the railway system, Palmerston North must necessarily be a large and busy railway centre. It has to deal with the traffic from the North—that is, not only from the Taranaki District, but also from the Auckland District, and in addition to that the Napier traffic. There has also to be dealt with at that station the traffic from Wellington, and also the traffic on the Foxton Branch. Therefore the traffic