

For an unearned increment?—Yes. In Christchurch, when the station was situated in the vicinity of Barbadoes Street the business premises were much more valuable than they are now, owing to the fact that the station was shifted to Manchester Street.

It is natural to expect the same thing will happen here?—Yes, certainly.

I suppose all inland towns depend to a great extent on railway transit?—That is so.

For that reason the cities are dependent upon the railway and must follow it?—Yes.

*Mr. Myers.*] Mr. Holmes, have you had any experience of working railways—that is, have you had anything to do with the management of working railways?—Only in cases where the Public Works Department has worked traffic on unopened lines.

You do not regard that as putting you in the position of an expert in regard to the management and working of the railways?—No, that is so.

You are not for a moment suggesting that you have any expert knowledge in regard to the management and working of the railways?—Not on the major points.

Just give the Commission an idea of the experience you have had?—The managing of traffic on the sections of line under the control of the Public Works Department during the period of construction.

Mr. Holmes, I suppose you will concede this to me: that even if the interests of a few people who have land near the present railway-station at Palmerston North suffer by a change in the locality of the station, they must necessarily give way in the public interests?—Yes.

Have you any knowledge of the business from year to year that has been done, say, during the last twenty-five years at Palmerston North?—No.

Have you any idea of the difference between the volume of business, say, for the last ten years and the volume of business to-day that passes through Palmerston North?—No.

Will you then please tell the Commission why it is you suggest that the removal of the station is hardly a necessity?—Because the station can be extended to the south.

Unless you have some idea of the movement of the traffic year by year and its increase and its probable increase in view, how can you venture the opinion as a witness to this Commission that the removal of the station is hardly a necessity?—Because the present station can be extended to any extent—that is, north, south, east, and west.

Have you any knowledge of the requirements of the Department in connection with the facilities at Palmerston North—can you say whether you have any knowledge of the business?—Certainly not. I would like to add that there is ample land south of the present station for the requirements of the Railway Department.

Have you taken into consideration the accidents at level crossings in the neighbourhood of the railway?—Yes.

Do you consider that level crossings are proper in the neighbourhood of a station like Palmerston North?—No.

Do you not agree that it is a source of danger to have level crossings?—All level crossings are dangerous.

You give that opinion as an engineer?—Yes.

You have said that in Sydney and London they have stations in the city. Now, Mr. Holmes, you know that both in Sydney and in London the stations to which you refer are terminal stations?—Yes.

Can you compare terminal stations with a station like Palmerston North?—I say you can compare Palmerston North with a station like Clapham Junction in London.

What comparison do you desire to draw?—I say that the station accommodation can be increased in the same manner as it was extended at Clapham Junction.

If you have facilities available you can do that?—Yes, that is so.

Do you consider that the platform at Palmerston North is sufficiently wide?—No, I do not think it is wide enough.

Where are you going to get the increased width from?—By buying more land.

On which side?—I am referring to the piece of land farther down the line.

Your suggestion, as I understand it, is to buy land to the south and remove the station premises, &c.?—No, extend it.

Extend the platform?—Yes, and the sidings.

I suppose, Mr. Holmes, you will admit this: That the opinion of the men who are responsible for the working of the railways as to the facilities they require should necessarily be better than the opinion of a person who has not had the experience of working the railways?—In my position as Engineer-in-Chief it has been my duty in connection with the work of construction of railways to obtain from the Railway Department information as to the conveniences they require at stations and provide those conveniences. The Railway Department is now in possession of their requirements with respect to Palmerston North, but I say that any engineer would be just as competent to provide those requirements as the Railway Department.

What I am putting to you is this: Supposing you were still Engineer-in-Chief of the Public Works Department, and the Railway Department said they wanted certain accommodation, would you question their opinion?—Certainly not.

You would regard their opinion as better than yours because they have to operate the railways?—Yes.

I suppose, Mr. Holmes, that the Railway Department, after careful consideration, came to the conclusion that the suggestions you have made are not practicable. Having regard to the requirements of working the railways, would you accept that opinion at once in preference to your own?—I would accept their opinion as to the requirements, but I would not accept their opinion as to the best position of the station premises.