

Are you surprised?—Not a bit surprised. My answer to that question is this: in my judgment those men, however good they may be as business men, from the standpoint of railway deviation they know no more about it than any other man, and I consider they are just as entitled to give their opinion as other men. I could point out to you a petition which was handed to the Prime Minister containing the names of five hundred business men who know what is for the good of the place just as these men know. It is the greatest fallacy in modern times to assume for one moment that because a man may be a clever business man that he should tell us where the railway should go.

Mr. Thomson, the point I am putting to you is this: you will admit that these business men are interested in the consideration of this question?—Decidedly.

After all, it is the business people who are most likely to be prejudiced if any one is prejudiced. Can you say it is not the business people who are prejudiced mostly?—I cannot say that.

I suppose you have not been in any mercantile business?—No.

You have deposed that the photograph you put in is a photograph of the site of the new proposed station?—I say that.

Will you tell the Commission whose property that is shown in the photograph. I want to see whether you know, and I also want to know why you say that the last flood was there on the site named?—That is looking at it in a general way.

That will not suit me, Mr. Thomson. You have deposed that this is a photograph of the proposed station?—That is not what I said.

Pardon me?—I said that in driving out to the place in question and looking in a general way that is what you will see.

I put it to the Commission that the statement was made in answer to Mr. Luckie and asked in a question I put to the witness a few minutes ago. If there is any dispute I shall have the shorthand note read out. [The following was read out at the request of Mr. Myers: "You have deposed that the photograph you put in is a photograph of the site of the new proposed station?—I say that."] I had a deliberate purpose in asking that question because I believe Mr. Thomson is wrong. [To witness:] I ask you whose property is that shown in the photograph?—I do not know the names of the property-owners out there.

Do you know that that is a photograph of a Mr. Fair's property?—I do not know Mr. Fair even.

Would you be surprised to learn that the paddock of which this is a photograph is at least a half a mile away from the proposed railway-station? Do you still consider that is the site?—Mr. Luckie asked me the question if the country was under flood, and I said that in driving along Rangitikei Road that is what you will see [pointing to the photograph].

I only wanted to give you the opportunity of putting that right if you can. You said that was the site of the proposed station. It will be proved that the property shown in the photograph is half a mile away from the proposed railway-station?—I should question it, but I do not know.

Some reference was made by Mr. Luckie in regard to level crossings. Are you aware that the local body in Palmerston North has been pressing the Railway Department for years in regard to the railway-crossings?—I cannot speak about that, Mr. Myers.

The station was built some years ago, was it not?—Yes.

I suppose before the station was built the land which belongs to the people in whose interests we are now speaking was worth little or nothing?—You are speaking of a time when I did not know Palmerston North.

I suppose those people who owned land there got what you called an "unearned increment" by reason of the station being put there?—Yes. I should like to say this: that neither the Department nor the Government have the slightest right to inflict an injustice on the people, and it would be inflicting an injustice on a considerable number of people if the proposal submitted by the Department were given effect to.

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JOHN CHRYSTALL sworn and examined.

Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the Commission, may I be allowed to make a brief statement? Briefly, I support the statement made by Sir James Wilson. I am representing at this Commission the Foxton Borough Council. I also represent the Levin-Greatford Railway League. The league comprises the local bodies entrusted with the local government of territory extending from Paekakariki to Marton. In addition to that we have the support of most of the local bodies as far as Stratford (with the exception of Wanganui) and the local bodies as far as Taumarunui on the Main Trunk line. You will see that we are a body of some solidarity and of increasing popularity. We are approaching this matter from a national point of view. Our objective is to oppose the proposed Palmerston North deviation, and we say that the Levin-Greatford Railway is a matter of national importance. I will ask any one to show a case where the station has been successfully moved outside of a town in any part of the world. If the proposals of the Railway Department were given effect to the cost would be about £700,000, and it will mean a certain amount of difficult construction—for instance, miles of permanent-way, &c., will have to be pulled up. It will also cost the Palmerston North Borough Council a large amount of money, because it will have to provide new sidings for its gasworks, and it will be forced to lay electric trams to convey the people to and from the new station. A good deal of discussion has taken place as to why the Borough Council and the Chamber of Commerce unanimously endorse the proposals of the Railway Department. I may say that the Mayor of Palmerston North said that if they did not support the Railway Department's proposal they would be side-tracked by the Levin-Greatford League. In connection with the loss to business people I would like to say that you cannot disturb the existing conditions without causing a great deal of inconvenience to the people in the vicinity of the present station. Any one knows that the prosperity of