

SESS. II.—1879.
NEW ZEALAND.

PETITION OF INHABITANTS OF THE COUNTIES OF BULLER, INANGAHUA, AND GREY.

Presented by Mr. Reeves, 8th October, and ordered to be printed, 13th November, 1879.

To the Honorable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives
of New Zealand in Parliament assembled.

THE PETITION OF THE UNDERSIGNED

HUMBLY SHOWETH,—

THAT your petitioners are inhabitants of the Buller, Inangahua, and Grey Valleys, in the Counties of Buller, Inangahua, and Grey respectively.

2. That the majority of those whose signatures are hereto appended are the pioneers of this portion of New Zealand, who, in the fulfilment of the common obligation of colonists of this young country, have devoted the best years of their lifetime to the high purposes of colonization. Their active labours during the past fifteen years have resulted in the development of the extensive alluvial and quartz gold, coal, and other mineral fields of this portion of the colony; in the opening up, for permanent settlement, of a vast area of the estate of the colony; in the establishment and gradual expansion of innumerable labour-absorbing industries; and, so far as the isolated position of the communities, and the absence of adequate means of communication, trade, and commercial interchange, would permit, in all the advantages both to themselves and the colony generally which can result from the active industry of an enterprising population.

3. That in "The Immigration and Public Works Act, 1870," your petitioners recognized the honorable desire of Parliament to extend to all the chief districts of the colony alike the important advantages of railway communication, and the enormous increment to the wealth of the State which has resulted from the settlement of these communities, not less than their matchless natural resources, gave your petitioners reason to believe that the very earliest consideration would be bestowed upon our most pressing need for railway communication with the rest of the colony. Notwithstanding, however, that a period of eight years has since elapsed, during which public works have been vigorously proceeded with in many other and perhaps less productive settlements of New Zealand, your petitioners are still excluded from the advantages of railway connection.

4. That up to the present time your petitioners, although in proportion to numbers the largest contributors to the wealth of the colony, have been denied almost all participation in the benefits accruing from the expenditure of borrowed money upon public works, and, in addition to their share of the extra colonial charge arising under the provisions of the loan policy, have during the past six years borne a not inconsiderable burden of local taxation for the formation of roads, bridges, and tracks, which were indispensable to the profitable pursuit of their labours.

5. That your petitioners, believing the fundamental principle of the public works policy to be the construction of the main trunk lines of railway, have in this respect a paramount claim upon the favourable consideration of your honorable House. These communities include a very considerable area of the Middle Island; have been proved to be the seat of the great mineral wealth of the colony; and the necessity of opening them up by means of an arterial line of railway has already been affirmed by successive Governments.

6. That, in the opinion of your petitioners, the only system of railway capable of securing to these districts and the colony the very highest attainable advantages is that which would start from Foxhill, Nelson, thence follow the Valleys of the Buller, Inangahua, and Grey, to Ahaura, and there connect with the midland line from Christchurch to Brunnerton. This route would at once open up the whole of the northern parts of this Island, and bring the important Districts of Westport and Charleston within easy access of the line.

7. That your petitioners, as permanent settlers in the country, are thoroughly convinced the time has come when it is absolutely imperative that the State should, by railway construction, not only give additional stimulus to the internal development and productiveness of these valuable fields, but unlock their vast and varied resources to the labour and enterprise of the whole colony. This your petitioners would respectfully urge as a duty which, in their humble opinion, the State owes, not only to an isolated and long-overlooked section of the colonists, but one which the exigencies of public policy and the commercial and industrial well-being of New Zealand at large alike demand.