

FRIDAY, 5TH DECEMBER, 1879.

Committee met pursuant to notice.

Present : Mr. Bunny, Mr. George, Hon. Mr. Gisborne, Mr. Macandrew, Mr. Reid (Chairman), and Mr. Seddon.

The minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed.

On the motion of Mr. Macandrew, it was unanimously resolved that the following report, submitted by the Chairman, be adopted, and that the Chairman report the same to the House, namely :—

That the Committee have carefully considered the question referred to them, and have taken evidence thereon of Mr. Blair, Engineer in Charge for the Middle Island; Mr. O'Connor, District Engineer for Westland; Mr. Wylde, civil engineer; Mr. Brown, Registrar-General; and the Hon. H. H. Lahmann, M.L.C.

The proposed diversion would lengthen the line by about ten miles, but no complete survey has as yet been made which would furnish a reliable estimate of the additional cost of construction which the diversion would entail.

The Committee are of opinion that, in the case of no great additional expenditure being caused by the diversion or of any steep gradients being necessary, the connection of three comparatively large centres of population by a loop line with the termini of Hokitika and Greymouth would insure a much larger reproductiveness than can be anticipated from the original line along the beach. A vast extent of valuable land, rich in timber and minerals, would be opened up; a large increase of goods and passenger traffic would be secured; and permanent settlement promoted.

The Committee feel assured that the diversion of the line in the manner indicated would in every respect prove to be of greater advantage than by the construction of two branch lines to Kumara and Goldsborough. The length of line in the former case would be shorter, and the necessary additional expenditure for plant of £5,000 on each branch line, together with the working expenses estimated at £25 per week for each of the branches, would be obviated.

The Committee therefore recommend that the survey should forthwith be made to show the best line of diversion and its probable cost; and, should the cost of the diversion not increase the original estimate of the whole line, or only necessitate a small addition thereto, that the works should be proceeded with in the direction indicated immediately upon the survey being completed.

While the survey is being proceeded with, no delay need take place in the formation of the line to the Arahura and Teremakau Rivers, nor in the construction of the bridges over these two rivers.

The Committee would therefore further recommend that these works be in the meantime prosecuted with all practicable despatch.

The Committee then adjourned.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, 25TH NOVEMBER, 1879.

Mr. W. N. BLAIR, Engineer in Charge, Middle Island, examined.

Mr. Blair.

25th Nov., 1879.

1. *The Chairman.*] This Committee, you are aware, Mr. Blair, is appointed to inquire as to the expediency of constructing a line of railway from Hokitika to Greymouth, in order that it may pass through Stafford Town, Waimea, and Goldsborough. As you were in Wellington we thought it would be advisable to summon you to attend to give evidence and produce papers in connection with the subject. Perhaps you would first of all tell the Committee what the cost of the railway would be, and what would be the difference between the cost of the line at present contemplated and that spoken of? —I produce a map of the district, and also a plan showing the levels. This [pointing to the map] is Greymouth, and that is Hokitika, and the proposed line runs along the beach. It is very straight and flat—indeed, it is almost level. This plan also shows approximately where the diversion would come, and also where the branches would be—that is, in case of branches being made. Here is the diversion, and here are Stafford Town and Goldsborough, and this is Kumara. The plan I now hold in my hand shows the levels over the two lines. The one, as I have said, is practically level. With regard to the other the ruling gradient would be 1 in 50, but the curves would be very sharp, probably about 5-chain curves.

2. Is that pretty well on the same line as the present tramway is—that from Greymouth to Kumara?—Yes.

3. *Mr. Seddon.*] What is the distance, the entire length of the deviation?—The increased distance is eleven and a quarter miles.

4. What is the length of the branch line from the Teremakau to the Kumara?—Five miles; a shade over five miles.

5. Then to make a loop instead of a branch to join the railway again would involve the addition of six miles?—Yes; it would be the difference between five miles and eleven and a quarter miles—about six miles.

6. The intention is to make a branch line from the Teremakau to Kumara, is it not?—I have not heard.

7. Have you a report of the year 1877 on this subject?—No, I have not got it; but I believe there was a report. A Committee sat that year.

Mr. Seddon: Perhaps the Clerk would get the report for 1877.

8. The next question I wish to ask is, what is the population between the Teremakau and the other point? Is the district inhabited at all?—There are very few people there, I believe.

9. What country does it run through?—Poor unproductive country.

10. Any timber?—I do not think there is timber along the sea-coast—none of much account.