

The authority which I now propose to ask for, on account of this railway, will provide for completing all the work at present in hand, and also for additional works as follows. The Te Kuiti section, 11 miles, and the Waitete section, 9 miles, at north end, and the Hunterville section, 5 miles, at south end; and also further improvements in the navigation of the Wanganui River, and the construction of further approach-roads to give access to the railway-works.

LINE CONNECTING NEW PLYMOUTH WITH MAIN TRUNK LINE.

During the recess, although no further actual surveys have been made, still a good deal of exploration has taken place both by officers of the Lands Department and that of the Public Works, and we now have every reason to believe that a fairly good line can be got, starting from a point on the main line about 60 miles south of Te Awamutu, following the course of the Ohura, the Eao, and the Tangarakau Rivers, thence south-westerly across the range to one of the branches of the Mimi River, and along that river towards the coast, and southward to Waitara.

This line would traverse a large tract of first-class arable land in the valley of the Ohura, and intersect the upper portion of the extensive coalfield now well defined, and will make that coal available for use all over that portion of the Island from the Waikato to where the navigation of the Wanganui and Eao ceases. We have sufficiently reliable surveys and information to be able to say that the line will not be exceptionally expensive, that the length of the connecting link between Waitara and the main line would be about 75 miles, the cost will not exceed about £8,000 per mile all through, and the greater portion of the very heavy country on the line reported upon from Stratford two years ago will be avoided. Whenever the House so directs a detailed survey of this line can be put in hand.

RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY OF COUNTRY BETWEEN NAPIER AND OPOTIKI VIA GISBORNE.

During the last recess I instructed the Engineer-in-Chief to send the Inspecting Engineer (Mr. Knorpp) to visit the district between Napier and Opotiki, traversing the country through Wairoa, Gisborne, and from thence to the East Cape, as well as from Gisborne to Opotiki.

He has made a reconnaissance survey of the country, with a view of ascertaining how it can best be opened up by railways or roads.

His report contains a great deal of useful information, and shows that the district lying to the north and east of Gisborne can be best served by railway communication, while that between Gisborne and Napier is so broken that a railway would almost be impracticable, and could therefore only be opened up by roads.

This report (with maps) will be printed and laid on the table of the House within a few days.

NAPIER—WOODVILLE.

The contractors for the extension from Tahoraite towards Woodville are making very fair progress with the work. A contract will shortly be let for completing the line to Woodville, including the railway-station there, to be finished and opened for traffic in about twelve months.

WOODVILLE—PALMERSTON.

A contract is now ready to be let for the construction of this line through the Gorge. This section will take about two years to complete, owing to the heavy nature of the works, and while in progress the plans will be prepared for the completion on to Palmerston.

WELLINGTON—MASTERTON.

Very considerable additions have been made to the station-accommodation, to the rolling-stock, and to the workshops on this line during the year, and much more will be required to keep pace with the increasing traffic.