

1888.
NEW ZEALAND.

WASTE LANDS COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF THE) ON THE OTAGO CENTRAL RAILWAY BILL, TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE AND APPENDIX.

Brought up 8th June, 1888, and ordered to be printed.

REPORT.

THE Waste Lands Committee, to whom was referred the Otago Central Railway Bill, have the honour to report:—

“That, after having gone carefully through the Bill, and taken the evidence of Mr. McKerrow, Surveyor-General, Mr. Blair, Assistant Engineer-in-Chief, and Mr. Pyke, M.H.R., they are of opinion that the Bill should not be allowed to proceed.”

JAMES FULTON,
Chairman.

8th June, 1888.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, 22ND MAY, 1888.

Mr. JAMES MCKERROW, Surveyor-General, examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] The Committee is now prepared to hear your evidence, Mr. McKerrow?—When giving evidence before the Waste Lands Committee on this subject about a year ago the evidence then given had reference principally to the part of the line between Taieri Lake and the Clyde. This Bill embraces the whole line from Wingatui Junction to Lake Hawea. The evidence I shall now give to the Committee will accordingly cover a larger extent of country, and be an amplification of what was given before. I have prepared a map showing the line of railway with the fifteen-mile limit. The area included is (in round numbers) 2,745,000 acres, of which 2,175,000 acres is now let on pastoral lease. The balance of the area is made up of endowments to the Dunedin High School, to the Otago University, to the Athenæum, and Museum; a variety of municipal endowments, making about 100,000 acres; freehold lands, about 255,000 acres; then, of Lakes Hawea and Wanaka, so much as comes within the fifteen-mile limit—75,000 acres. There are some mountain lands small portions of which are unlet, about 135,000 acres. The whole of the above amounting to the total of 2,745,000 acres within the fifteen-mile limit. The revenue derivable from these 2,175,000 acres is £48,000. I stated before that there were about 250,000 acres of agricultural land within these Crown lands. That area will still stand about true, for, although you take in more country now, the agricultural portion of it is all pretty well freehold, so that the amount of agricultural land belonging to the Crown for the whole line is much the same as it was.

2. *Mr. Rhodes.*] 250,000 acres Crown agricultural land?—Yes, Crown land.

3. *Mr. J. McKenzie.*] Will you be good enough to tell the Committee how taking blocks of land within this limit will affect the balance of the Crown land left for pastoral purposes?—It will not affect them in any way whatever if they are judiciously selected with workable boundaries, taking care to have high and low country associated together. I think, from what I see in the schedule, that is provided for now. It is stated distinctly that the frontage of a block shall not bear a greater proportion than one-half the depth, and that the rectangular shape may be varied to suit the natural conditions of the country. If these are attended to I think a judicious selection of blocks can be made.

4. That is, taking a frontage of seven and a half miles to fifteen miles back, blocks could be taken without any serious injury to the Crown lands left?—Yes; with the exceptions where the fifteen-mile limit overlaps the main watershed and takes in country that would have no connection with the railway.