

1890.

NEW ZEALAND.

MIDLAND RAILWAY.

PROPOSED DEVIATION NEAR LAKE BRUNNER (REPORT ON, BY MR. C. Y. O'CONNOR, M.INST.C.E.).

Laid on the Table by the Hon. T. Fergus, with the Leave of the House.

Mr. C. Y. O'CONNOR to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

Public Works Office, Wellington, 15th April, 1890.

In accordance with your instructions that I should report upon the proposed deviation of the Midland Railway at Lake Brunner, I have the honour to state that I carefully examined into the question on the ground between the 1st and the 14th ultimo, and since then have collected a large amount of further data on the subject, and have now the honour to report as follows :—

The map attached hereto—P.W.D. 16556A—shows the contract line (in blue) and the proposed deviation (in yellow) in relation to the surrounding districts.

The object sought to be attained is to get better grades than on contract line, and also to get into country which, it is calculated, would yield better results to the railway from an agricultural-settlement and general-traffic point of view.

That the grades on the route now proposed would be better than those on contract line, especially between the eleventh and sixteenth miles, there cannot be any doubt. It is true that grades between these points as good as those on proposed deviation could be attained by a mere local deviation from contract line, as indicated by dotted blue line on the map; but this would entail an additional length of railway of quite two miles, whereas it is alleged that the larger deviation proposed, as indicated by yellow line, would scarcely involve any additional length of railway at all, or, at most, not more than, say, half a mile of additional length.

As regards the country to be served by the railway, I think that the contention of the company is correct—namely, that the deviation will open up a larger area of country suitable for settlement, and more calculated to afford traffic to the railway, than the contract line would do.

In addition to the country actually traversed by the railway, too, the proposed deviation will give better access to a large area of country, more or less suitable for settlement, at the headwaters of Nelson Creek, Bell Hill, and from thence by the Kopara River to the Haupiri and Ahaura flats. The inhabitants of that part of the country are consequently all in favour of the deviation.

As against this, it has been contended on behalf of the inhabitants in the New River district, and also on behalf of the inhabitants of southern Westland, that it would be a great detriment to their interests if the contract line were departed from.

In the case of the inhabitants of the New River district, this contention is based on the assumption that they could get access to the railway on the western shore of Lake Brunner, between the fifteenth and nineteenth miles, by means of roads which would hereafter be made.

I do not think, however, that there is very much in this contention, as the country between Nemona, Marsden, Clifton, and other townships in the New River district, and the shores of Lake Brunner, is very rough, and rises to a considerable height, and connecting roads would therefore probably have steep grades and be costly to construct. Besides this, too, the natural outlet of the whole of this New River country is towards the seaboard, and consequently towards the Hokitika-Greymouth Railway, and Greymouth is its natural market and source of supply.

Even, too, if it were reasonably practicable to obtain their supplies direct from Christchurch, the communities themselves are so small and scattered that they could not, probably, afford to maintain the necessary roads and conveyances which would be requisite to get their supplies in that way; while, on the contrary, means of communication with Greymouth by road are already complete and in full operation, and will probably be further facilitated when the Hokitika-Greymouth Railway is opened from Greymouth to the Teremakau.

As regards access to the southern part of Westland, the contention is that, if the contract line were adhered to, a ready means of access would be afforded by a road or railway from Kumara to a point on Lake Brunner near the twentieth mile on railway-line. This is indicated on map by a green line. There is at present a dray-road for five miles of this distance—namely, from Kumara to Pounamū—and for the remainder of the distance there is a horse-track.

As to a railway along this route, I think it is quite out of the question, as the country is so rough in places that reasonable grades could only be obtained at an excessive cost. A fairly