

1892.
NEW ZEALAND.

NORTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY COMMITTEE
(REPORT OF THE, TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE AND APPENDIX).

Brought up 6th October, 1892, and ordered to be printed.

ORDER OF REFERENCE.

Extract from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

WEDNESDAY, THE 31ST DAY OF AUGUST, 1892.

Ordered, "That a Select Committee be appointed, to whom shall be referred the question of the best method of connecting Auckland and Wellington by railway; such Committee to consist of Mr. Blake, Mr. Carnecross, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Rhodes, Mr. Wright, and Mr. C. H. Mills; three to form a quorum; with power to summon witnesses, take evidence on oath or otherwise, and to call for papers; and to report within four weeks."—(Mr. SHEPA.)

R E P O R T.

In compliance with the order of the House made on the 31st day of August, your Committee have taken the evidence of twenty-six witnesses, and made the fullest inquiry into the subject that the time at their disposal has permitted.

1. Your Committee find that the decision arrived at by a former parliamentary Committee, appointed in 1884 to investigate this matter, was quite in accordance with the evidence then submitted to them, and in reliance upon which they recommended the construction of a railway from Marton to Te Awamutu.

2. Your Committee also find that the evidence tendered to the Committee of 1884 was in some respects exceedingly erroneous.

3. For instance, the cost of constructing a railway 216 miles in length from Marton to Te Awamutu was then estimated at £1,293,134, and is now estimated at £2,007,985, including the sum of £402,025 already expended.

4. As further evidence of the entire want of accuracy in the original estimate, another example may suffice. The bridges along the central route in 1884 were estimated to cost £30,000, whilst the present estimate of expenditure under the heading "Bridges and Viaducts" is £256,750; and your Committee think that, owing to the unfinished state of the exploration and surveys over a large portion of the central route, the present estimate of the cost is probably far below what may ultimately be required.

5. Since 1884 a considerable sum has been expended in exploring and surveying the country between Stratford and Ongarue (the point of divergence from the central route), which district is for the most part comprised under what is hereinafter referred to as the Ngaire route.

6. The information thus obtained shows that a line of railway can be carried through this country at a less cost per mile than one along the central route.

7. That the actual length to be made between Ngaire and Ongarue is 103 miles 75 chains, whilst the estimated distance from the end of the open line at Rangatira to Ongarue is 138 miles 10 chains, thus showing 34 miles 15 chains less to be made on the Ngaire route than are required to complete the central line, except a few miles now partly constructed.

8. That the saving in cost in favour of the Ngaire line is at present estimated by the Public Works Department at £460,034, and the saving will probably be much more, owing to the want of detailed information in respect of nearly eighty miles unsurveyed on the central route.

9. Your Committee are of opinion that the country along the Ngaire route is of a character more likely to attract permanent settlers than the country extending for an equal distance south of Ongarue along the central route, whilst acre for acre it will support a much larger population, and is favoured with a more genial climate.

10. The line from Ongarue southwards towards Marton, for a distance of at least fifty miles, traverses an elevated plateau, where the winters are severe and the soil poor.