

Awakino Route.

Coal.—The Mokau coal-measures crop out in the Awakino Valley, close to Mahoenui.

Limestone occurs a short distance up the Mokau River from the heads, and also abundantly from a few miles below Mahoenui to the central line. There are numerous varieties, one being of an amorphous description, which can be quarried in large blocks; another is commonly described as shell rock; another is crystallized and is built up of laminations; while another consists of very small fragments of other varieties cemented together—this also occurs in the form of laminations. This variety is very suitable for constructing various articles in building-work, such as pilasters, friezes, &c., and also for such articles of furniture as billiard-table and washstand tops, and also for tombstones; it is very handsome, and takes a good polish. The laminations of the last two varieties are easily separated, and, as they vary very much in thickness and area, large slabs can be obtained, with only the trouble of separating them, suitable for any class of work.

Gravel occurs in the Mimi Valley, and upper part of the Awakino River.

Building-stone, in the form of shell rock and rhyolite, suitable for culvert-construction can be obtained, the former near Mokau Heads, the latter near Central line; while limestone, as described above, can be obtained from 57 miles to Central line, suitable for the highest classes of building- and bridge-construction.

TIMBERS.

Ngaire Route.

Ordinary building timbers, comprising rimu, kahikatea, and matai, can be obtained in abundance throughout the route, and also such timbers as maire, hinau, and rewarewa to a limited extent. In the Tangarakau Gorge a little birch and tanekaha can be obtained. Totara is very scarce.

Waitara Route.

Similar to Ngaire route.

Awakino Route.

Very similar to Ngaire route. A better description of birch can be obtained. Puriri in limited quantities can be obtained along the coast from Tongaporutu River northwards. Totara is scarce.

AREAS OF COUNTRY SERVED.

Ngaire Route.

On the attached plan of the Taranaki Province the country already served for ten miles on each side of the New Plymouth-Wanganui and Central lines is coloured brown. The country that would be served for ten miles on each side of the Ngaire route is coloured red.

Mokau Port.

The area of country that will be served by this port is coloured blue.

Awakino Route.

The area of country that will be served for ten miles on each side of this route, exclusive of that served by Mokau Port, is coloured yellow. This shows that a minimum of benefit is derived from the Awakino route.

The country along the Ngaire route changes a few miles above Nihoniho-o-te-kioire, on the Ohura River, and within the influence of the Central line, to a very inferior class, while to the westward it continues good; so that if the line as explored by myself in 1884 was adopted from either Mangaroa or Ohura Valleys across to Mokau-iti Valley, thence to and up the Mokau Valley to Mokau Station, the country coloured yellow along the northern part of Awakino route would be served by the Ngaire route, leaving a very small area which would not derive material benefit from a railway-line or seaport. This deviation would make the Ngaire route longer than continuing up the Ohura Valley, but less of it would be within the influence of the Central line.

RAILWAY REVENUE.

General.

A railway connecting Taranaki with Auckland by whatever route will not derive any revenue from through goods traffic, as it could not compete against sea-carriage any more than the Wellington-New Plymouth line can compete against the steamers trading into the Ports of Wanganui, Patea, New Plymouth, and Waitara. Consequently it must depend for revenue upon the traffic with the nearest seaport, and so much through passenger traffic as may be gained through dread of a sea-passage.

According to present rates, the cost of a single first-class ticket by railway from New Plymouth to Auckland will be, according to route, from £2 12s. to £3 6s., without meals, while the present steamer-fare is £1 11s., including meals, and 1s. from Onehunga to Auckland, a very considerable difference in favour of the sea-passage, which many passengers will no doubt avail themselves of, as is done at present between New Plymouth and Wellington.

The route therefore which will bring the most traffic to a seaport must be the best. This will be that which opens up the greatest extent of good land beyond the reach of payable road-carriage.

Ngaire Route.

A glance at the map already referred to shows that the Ngaire route strikes well inland, and runs through good country situated inland of the belt of rough country which extends from middle