

1902.

NEW ZEALAND.

RAILWAYS COMMITTEE:

REPORT AND EVIDENCE ON THE PETITION OF W. J. SCRIMGEOUR AND OTHERS *RE* RAILWAY FROM LAWRENCE TO ROXBURGH.

(MR. R. MCKENZIE, CHAIRMAN.)

Report and Evidence brought up 29th September, 1902, and ordered to be printed.

PETITION.

To the Hon. the Speaker and Members of the General Assembly of New Zealand, in session now assembled.

THE memorial of the undersigned, the settlers of Lawrence, Tuapeka Flat, Evans Flat, Tuapeka West, Tuapeka Mouth, Beaumont, Rae's Junction, Island Block, Horseshoe Bend, Miller's Flat, Ettrick, Roxburgh, Coal Creek, and surrounding districts, in the Provincial District of Otago, respectfully sheweth—

1. That it is now twenty-five years since the line from Lawrence to Roxburgh was surveyed.
2. That the country intervening between Lawrence and Roxburgh has been settled on during the last forty years, and during that time, owing to the inaccessibility to markets, the agricultural and mineral development of the districts aforementioned has been seriously retarded.
3. That roading through those districts has been, and is still, a heavy burden on the settlers and producers, and the material available for maintenance is of such inferior character that the recurring yearly expense cannot be met without heavy annual grants from the Government.
4. That the annual expenditure now devoted to the maintenance of the main county road, which during a great part of the year is impassable, would be the means of putting the country roads, now very much neglected, in order, besides relieving both the Government and the settlers of large yearly contributions.
5. That the country to be traversed by such a line of railway consists of agricultural, pastoral, fruit-growing, and mineral lands, the value and productive powers of which would be largely increased if cheap and rapid transit to market were provided.
6. That Roxburgh and Coal Creek are the largest fruit-growing districts in Otago, and at present, under very great difficulties, send large quantities of fruit to the southern and northern markets, between 70 tons and 80 tons per week being carted over forty miles of bad road to the railway during the season. With railway communication, such as your Petitioners request, the industry would be enormously developed, as there are immense areas of land suitable for fruit cultivation which could be profitably utilised for that purpose under cheaper and more rapid conditions of transit to market.
7. That there are also in the districts of Roxburgh and Coal Creek large deposits of coal almost entirely untouched, but which, if tapped by a railway, would suffice to supply at a cheap rate the whole of the districts between there and Lawrence, a distance of forty miles.
8. That the mineral resources alone would become a source of enormous wealth and create a large carrying trade, profitable to the railway and of great benefit to settlers throughout a large extent of country.
9. That there are about thirty dredges on the Molyneux River and the adjacent flats between Coal Creek and Lawrence. The coal required for those dredges for steaming purposes is at the rate of 800 tons per week, which would be all conveyed by rail. In addition, large quantities of building and repairing material are constantly required by those dredges which are now conveyed by road at a heavy expense and delay.
10. That there are also in the Roxburgh and Coal Creek districts large areas of agricultural and pastoral lands which produce stock, wool, and grain, which could be immensely increased if better facilities for despatch to market were provided.
11. That in the Moa Flat and Miller's Flat districts there are large areas of rich alluvial soil on which both wheat, oats, and barley are grown; also root crops of various kinds. At present those lands are not utilised to the extent they would be had the settlers such inducements as a railway would provide.
12. That the lands lying between Miller's Flat and Beaumont, a distance of fifteen miles, are largely auriferous, farming and pastoral industry being also carried on.
13. That the Beaumont is an old, thickly populated settlement, and contains some of the finest