

the Roxburgh and Coal Creek districts large areas of agricultural and pastoral land which produce stock, wool, and grain, which could be immensely increased if better facilities for despatch to market were provided. 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. 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. The Beaumont is an old thickly populated settlement, and contains some of the finest agricultural land in the Province of Otago. Both dairying and fruit-growing industries would flourish here and settlement would be largely increased if railway communication were provided. From Beaumont to Lawrence, a distance of twelve miles, there is a large area of land under cultivation, as well as pastoral country, the value of which would be materially increased by railway communication. There is a flourishing, extensive, and thickly settled farming district at Tuapeka West, about eleven miles from Lawrence, which, besides securing the advantages of cheap lime, would be brought considerably nearer the railway than at present, and be thereby saved the delay, expense, and labour of carting their produce over a long stretch of one of the worst portions of the county main road, as well as being brought within easy reach of all those advantages which the facilities afforded by convenient railway communication confer on country settlers. The traders, business-people, and others in Lawrence suffer serious loss and disadvantages by reason of the absence of railway communication with the producing districts throughout the County of Tuapeka, of which Lawrence is the chief town and business centre, and at present the railway terminus. The various industries in the County of Tuapeka from Lawrence to Roxburgh, a distance of forty miles, would be developed on a larger and more profitable scale by the extension of the line, leading to a large increase of the industrial population and in the productive output of the land, while enterprise would be stimulated, trade and business extended and improved, the general prosperity of the district secured on a larger and more stable basis, and the revenue and wealth of the colony materially benefited and increased.

Mr. J. C. ARBUCKLE examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—J. C. Arbuckle.
2. Where do you live?—At Lawrence.
3. What is your occupation?—I am an auctioneer and general merchant.
4. You desire to make a statement before the Committee on the subject-matter of the petition?—Yes. Well, as a resident of the district for nearly forty years, I am well conversant with the wants and disabilities of the settlers beyond Lawrence. The main road between the two places—Lawrence and Rae's Junction—is now in as bad a condition as it was thirty years ago. As a proof of that, I could give you a personal instance that happened to me this winter. About two months ago I had a small quantity of merchandise to send to Miller's Flat, which is about twenty miles from where I live. There are not many wagons on the road at the present time, and, the roads being so bad, they are fully occupied with the general loadings for the merchants they are supplying. I tried to get this small quantity of merchandise up by the wagons, and could not do so. To get it up in time I had to hire a special trap, which costs £3, to send up $4\frac{3}{4}$ cwt. a distance of twenty-six miles on this main road. The difficulty in keeping the main road in repair is the want of proper material within the county; the material is no good. It is only the rotten rock, that will stand no wear-and-tear. It is a continual recurring expense every year. The main road, as I say, is just as far back as it was between thirty and forty years ago. The district of Teviot is a large fruit-growing one, and Roxburgh and Coal Creek. It is also a large mining district. The trade at the present time causes an enormous traffic on the road owing to the consumption of coal. There is coal at Coal Creek, which is carted down a little more than half-way to Lawrence, and from Lawrence again it is carted nearly half-way up again. Miller's Flat is an agricultural district, and a good barley-growing district. There is a limited amount of barley grown there now which would be very largely increased if there were facilities for getting it into the market. The same remark applies to the fruit-growing industry all along from the Teviot down. There would be a very large industry opened up in that way, and this railway that we ask for would also run adjacent and through a number of runs on this Teviot Station. It would tap Moa Flat Station within a reasonable distance. It would be very useful for that, and Beaumont, and various other stations, so that there would be a considerable amount of traffic in wheat, coal, grain, and dredging material going up and down. If there are any questions that members of the Committee would like to ask me with reference to it, I would be glad to answer them. I may say that the distance between Lawrence and Roxburgh is forty miles. From Roxburgh to Dunedin *via* Heriot would entail a further distance of about thirty-seven miles. It would be further to go that way to Dunedin than it would be from Lawrence.
5. Is that all you wish to say?—I do not think there is anything else I need say.
6. Have you got any statistics in connection with this work—of the probable amount of passenger traffic or of the approximate cost of the railway?—No; I have no idea of the cost of the railway. It would depend altogether upon whether a light line of railway were constructed, which is a matter I could not go into at all. I should say, if there is a light line of railway constructed at a less cost than the ordinary railway-line, the mere saving of keeping up the main road would go a long way towards paying interest on the line—the saving of expenditure on the main road would go a long way towards paying interest upon the construction.
7. What is the distance?—Forty miles.
8. What population would be served by it: what is the present population?—Well, the population of Lawrence and the surrounding districts—that is, immediately adjacent—would be about eighteen hundred.