

3. Your petitioners present that it is common ground and undeniable that railway communication between Taupo and the outside world is a necessity. Even the Rotorua Chamber of Commerce concede this proposition. The question then arises of ways and means, as to which two alternative propositions have been set up: (a) That the Government construct a line from Rotorua to Taupo *via* Waiotapu and Wairakei, a distance of some fifty-six miles; (b) that the Government grant the petition of the Taupo Totara Timber Company enabling them to extend their present Putaruru line to Taupo *via* Wairakei, a distance of some nineteen miles.

4. Your petitioners present that, being the settlers in the district referred to, and whose interests are therefore most vitally affected by the proposed railway-construction, they have given the matter very deep and earnest consideration in all its bearings, and have unanimously come to the conclusion under the circumstances existing at the present time that it is in the interests of this Dominion that the petition of the Taupo Totara Timber Company be favourably considered and granted either in its present or some modified form, with such restrictions as the Government may deem it advisable to impose.

Your petitioners cannot in this petition go into all the arguments for and against the two schemes outlined above, but will endeavour to place on record a few main points affecting the issue, and pray that they may be allowed to submit evidence before the parliamentary Committee dealing with the subject.

(i.) Regarding the suggestion of the Rotorua Chamber of Commerce that a railway be constructed from Rotorua to Taupo *via* Waiotapu and Wairakei: Your petitioners would lay stress on the fact that the Hon. the Minister of Public Works, in reply to a recent deputation from Rotorua on the subject, pointed out that owing to the Government having at present so much other important railway-construction work on hand it would be many years before the construction of such a line as the Rotorua-Taupo line could be undertaken by the Government. Added to which the fact that there are fifty-six miles of new railway to construct postpones the possibility of such a line being available for use for probably twenty years. No survey of the proposed route from Rotorua has been made *via* Waiotapu or otherwise, and it has yet to be demonstrated that such a line is a practical possibility. On the other hand, the line from Putaruru to Taupo is actually constructed and in use as far as Mokai, and the remaining nineteen miles to Taupo has been surveyed and demonstrated to be not only a practical proposition, but a line of exceedingly easy gradients and cheap of construction. Furthermore, the Taupo Totara Timber Company are prepared to standardize the line to Taupo, and have the same running within two years. If, therefore, the Government are not prepared at the present time to construct this important railway connection of Taupo by either route, your petitioners humbly pray that private enterprise be permitted to carry out the work. The interests of the State may be protected by a provision enabling the Government to acquire the railway at a valuation at any time, and in the meantime by the imposition of maximum passenger-fares, freight charges, and such other restrictions as may be necessary.

Hence, instead of the State having to expend a sum of about £400,000 at the present time, the line can be constructed, and the country benefited accordingly, at no present expense or outlay to the State. And, seeing that about 350,000 acres of Crown land will be doubled in value, at no expense to the Government, by the construction of the railway, your petitioners believe that it is imperative, in the interests of the State, that this work should be allowed to be pushed on at as early a date as possible.

The country through which the Putaruru line travels is infinitely superior in quality to that along the Rotorua route, and will be much more speedily taken up and settled, and the additional fact that the area tapped by the Putaruru line contains a huge belt of valuable and marketable totara and other timbers convinces your petitioners that the line *via* Putaruru will prove of more benefit to the country than the Rotorua route.

The arguments of the opponents of the petition serving to throw doubt upon the commercial success of the undertaking form a very strong reason why private enterprise should be allowed to construct the railway, and thus save the Government the risk of sinking so large a sum of money on what the objectors state they consider a doubtful enterprise.

Furthermore, the line *via* Rotorua would burden your petitioners with the extra haulage rates for freight occasioned by their produce having to be carried over the Mamaku Range, where one of the highest points of the railway system is reached, which expense would be avoided *via* the Putaruru line. Again, the Putaruru line would be in the natural line of extension of the present Government railway system from Auckland, connecting Taupo with Tokaanu and the Main Trunk line.

(ii.) Your petitioners present that the Native population of the district are as a whole unanimously in favour of the early construction of the Putaruru line on the terms of the petition of the Totara Timber Company, and respectfully beg to point out that the undertaking will greatly benefit the Natives in the district. For instance, it may be reasonably assumed that the land affected by the railway will be doubled in value. Taking the value of the 800,000 acres of Native land affected as at 5s. per acre, the Natives have at the present time land valued at £200,000. If they sell 200,000 acres at 5s. per acre they will receive in cash £50,000, which could be invested for them by the Public Trustee, and they would retain 600,000 acres (doubled in value), therefore worth 10s. per acre, or worth £300,000 in value. Hence their position would be improved by £50,000 cash and £100,000 in value. In addition, as we have already mentioned, the 350,000 acres of Crown land would be doubled in value at no expense to the State. Furthermore, the Taupo Totara Timber Company undertake to settle the 200,000 acres purchased by them in the areas prescribed by the statutes of the Dominion, thus assuring a speedy development of so large a district, which at the present time is starved for want of communication and means of distributing and obtaining manures for the cultivation and bringing-in of the land, which district is now crying aloud for development and settlement.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray,—