

flattish land closely adjacent to the lower reaches of the Wairoa River to Tokatōka, and thence across the Raupo and Ruawai Flats, and passes onwards through some difficult country to the upper reaches of the Arapaoa Branch of the Kaipara Harbour until it joins the Main Trunk line at Paparoa Station, about ninety-two miles on the Main Trunk Railway mileage.

These routes are shown on the plan accompanying this report.

The fifth and sixth routes have this disadvantage: they require heavy bridge-construction at Dargaville, and in order to preserve the navigation of the upper reaches of the Wairoa River a lifting-span would be required.

We dismiss the fifth route, as it runs through difficult country and does not serve to any great extent lands which in our opinion would warrant the expenditure of such a sum as would be required for its approximately sixteen miles of route as compared with the shorter routes adjacent to the Wairoa River. It also involves a junction with the Main Trunk line at a point only five miles and a half from the Waiotira Junction, and we believe it would be inconvenient in practice to have junctions on a main line of railway so close together.

The sixth route has the great advantage that it would at once serve flat and cultivated lands in the Arapohue, Raupo, and Ruawai districts. These districts are, in our estimation, reasonably well served by the present river communication, which borders the whole of the lands affected. This connection would have a length of about thirty-four miles, of which nearly one-half would pass through difficult country; and the evidence shows that for some miles this difficult country would be of the same character as that which has already given rise to trouble, involving costly construction, on the existing Main Trunk Railway.

We are of opinion that the flat and valuable lands already served by river navigation would not warrant an expenditure by the State of so large a sum as would be required to construct this railway as compared with either of the shorter routes, numbered 1 and 3, the length of each of which is approximately the same—about thirteen miles.

The No. 3 route (shown in blue on the plan) involves the crossing of the Wairoa River, with the necessity for an opening-bridge, and the advantages to be gained by its adoption are not, in our opinion, warranted as compared with No. 1 route.

We therefore recommend the adoption by the Government of route marked "No. 1," as shown by the full red line on the plan, with an estimated length of approximately thirteen miles. But with this recommendation we couple a suggestion that the Main Trunk line, as authorized between about 117 miles 60 chains and 121 miles 30 chains, should be deviated so as to cross the upper reaches of the Wairoa River and run on the western bank of that river through Pohoatua to Kirikopuni.

The Main Trunk line has to cross the Wairoa River under the authorized scheme at Kirikopuni, and we are informed by the engineers that the borings taken show that the site of a crossing below Pukehuia would be as favourable as at the authorized spot. This deviation would involve the loss of only about £2,000 on work which has already been done on the stretch from Pukehuia to Kirikopuni, and for loss on lands taken for the railway which would not then be needed. The adoption of this deviation of the Main Trunk line, as recommended by the Commission, would mean a saving in duplication of the railway of about two miles, reducing the connecting-line from approximately thirteen miles to about eleven miles, but slightly increasing the length of the Main Trunk line.

We believe that the trade on the Kaihu Valley Railway, and from the town and district of Dargaville, would warrant the construction of this railway so as to connect that detached railway with the Main Trunk line and to give the inhabitants of the Dargaville district a connection with the railway system of the north. We recommend that this work should be proceeded with as soon as labour and materials are available, so that it can be finished, if possible, coincidentally with the completion of the Main Trunk line to Kirikopuni (or to the point of intersection of the suggested deviation with the proposed connection from Dargaville at Pohoatua). We also recommend that the branch line from Waiotira Junction to Oakleigh should be made available as speedily as possible. If this be done the Dargaville district would be placed in railway communication with Whangarei Harbour, and the disadvantages which are suffered through the bar existing at the entrance to the