

(7) My views regarding the advantage to the settlement by the completion of the railway are fairly definite.

First, the success of the settlement is only going to be achieved by a fairly liberal use of phosphatic manures, and it must be recognized that no land responds so well to top-dressing as the class of soil on this block, and cheaper freights will induce top-dressing.

I had the honour of being able to point out to the Hon. Mr. Semple and Mr. McKenzie, Engineer-in-Chief, Public Works Department, some of the areas we have top-dressed as an experiment, and alongside some strips not treated. On that particular block (Block II), instead of being able to carry one dry sheep per acre during the year, we will carry a wet ewe this year and do her lamb well, and, in addition, the block has carried 100 breeding-cows for a good portion of the time since the top-dressing was carried out, while, without the top-dressing, the limit of cattle-carrying capacity of this block of 211 acres would be thirty head of dry cattle. The amount of superphosphate sown on this area only averaged 131 lb. per acre—with a similar top-dressing next year we expect to carry two ewes per acre and fatten all their lambs.

At the present time freight costs us 25s. per ton from Napier (it has been 27s. 6d. until recently). This, on top of 10s. 6d. per ton railage to Napier, is a consideration when the total railage to Kotemaori would probably be only about 15s. per ton. The difference in cost of top-dressing if the railway was completed would amount to about 3s. 4d. per acre per annum on dairying-land and 1s. 8d. per acre on grazing-land top-dressed.

A second advantage, if dairying was carried on to the extent I have suggested, would be in the carriage of milk and cream. It is well recognized that either of these carries much better over long distances by train than by lorry.

For the carriage of stock all the sections are as favourably situated to take advantage of rail transport as they are for road transport.

I am not able to give the cost per rail for the distance from here to Whakatū Freezing-works—about 55 miles—but the lorry charge is 1s. 3d. for lambs and 1s. 6d. to 2s. for sheep. The rail charge, I understand, would be about half, and the difference in condition on arrival at destination would easily equal the rail freight, and be that much more in favour of rail transport.

The advantage of the railway to settlers on this block would be much more evident provided the railway was working at about the time the sections here were selected than it would to older settlers in the district, because, in my opinion, those settlers who have used the road transport for a number of years would require to be educated to the use of the railway, whereas new settlers would, I think, patronize the railway from the commencement as a matter of course.

I might say, in conclusion, that I will welcome a visit from any one interested in the completion of the railway, and will be pleased to show them the results of our work to date.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Sgd.) J. B. MONTEATH, Station Manager.

KAKARIKI SETTLEMENT.

Statement showing development expenditure as at 31st December, 1935, under various headings as under:—

	£
Clearing and burning	11,010
Drainage	90
Fencing	4,800
Buildings	820
Cultivation	220
Grassing	6,765
Lime and manure	375
Survey and roading	1,025
Administration	1,670
Purchase price of freehold and leasehold areas ..	£24,000 13s. 4d.
Total area	19,287 acres 3 roods.
Area being developed	14,600 acres.

SOUTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY.

Hon. Minister of Public Works.

At the present time the railway is in operation from Christchurch to Parnassus, a distance of 85 miles, at the south end, and from Picton to Wharanui, a distance of 56 miles, at the north end, leaving a gap of approximately 76 miles between the open sections. At the northern end formation is practically completed from Wharanui to the Clarence Bridge, the length of this section being 20 miles, and rails have actually been laid to Washdyke Stream, 14 miles beyond Wharanui, although there is still a considerable amount of work to do at the Blue Slip, 61 miles 50 chains, this being the most difficult problem on this section.

From the Clarence Bridge to the Ohau Bluff, formation was in hand over a distance of 10 miles. At the south end formation was well in hand from Parnassus to the Conway, a distance of approximately 6 miles, while beyond the Conway 10 miles of formation is about 50 per cent. complete.