

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

CHRISTCHURCH, MONDAY, 20TH NOVEMBER, 1882.

THE Commission met at 2 o'clock, in the Provincial Council Buildings.—(Hon. Dr. Pollen in the chair.)

Mr. EDWARD DOBSON, Civil Engineer and Surveyor, examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] You have been engaged, under the Colonial Government, in making a survey of the East Coast route?—Yes, lately. I had previously laid out a line through the Hurunui to Hokitika for the Provincial Government. That was many years ago.

2. On what particular part of the East Coast line have you been employed lately?—Between the Waiau and Kaikoura.

3. Have you made a complete survey of that line?—I have made a complete survey of that portion of the line. I have made a complete plan and section of it; it is all pegged out.

4. Will you be good enough to tell us the character of the country through which the line passes?—It is very hilly, but perfectly practicable for railway communication.

5. What is the length of the section?—My survey was twenty-seven miles. When Mr. Blair sent me down to set it out, it was considered to be the most difficult part of the East Coast line.

6. Have you made any estimate of the cost of the work?—Yes. Mr. Blair has complete reports and estimates in detail. The report I sent is very complete.

7. Do you remember generally what the estimated cost of the whole would be?—I would rather not trust to memory. Mr. Blair will no doubt furnish the Commissioners with the report. The piece that I have been surveying is considered to be the most difficult and most expensive of the whole of the East Coast route.

8. Are the plans available here, so that the Commissioners could see them?—I do not know whether Mr. Blair has sent them up yet. They were sent to Dunedin about a month ago.

9. Have you been over any other portions of the line than that you were employed upon specially?—Not to the north. I reported on the East Coast line about four years ago up to about ten miles north of Kaikoura.

10. You know nothing of the country further on than that?—I have not surveyed it, and I should not like to speak positively about it. It was not considered necessary to go beyond Kaikoura with the detailed survey, because Mr. Foy had already reported on the practicability of the portion of the line north of the Kaikoura. I know the line very well from Blenheim down to Awatere, but not further south.

11. The cost of the work on the part of the line you surveyed would be exceptionally heavy generally?—Yes, about ten miles of it would be exceptionally heavy.

12. The average cost of our railways being £6,000 a mile, that portion would be much more expensive?—About ten miles of that portion would cost about £15,000 a mile. [Section produced.] This section represents the most difficult part of the East Coast line; the most difficult ten miles to construct.

13. How long is it since you got instructions to undertake this survey?—Four years ago—in April, 1878.

14. *Mr. Thomson.*] What is the highest point of the line that you have to go over?—490 feet.

15. *Mr. Fulton.*] Can you tell us the character of the land through which this line goes?—Up to the Conway it is very fine land indeed.

16. Is it private property?—All private property; there is scarcely any Crown land at all there. All the Parnassus Estate is private land; also the Hawkswood Estate. Fernyhurst is also private land. The greater part of Claverly is also freehold, and a considerable portion of the Kahutara Run is freehold. Up to the Conway the land is very fine indeed. Then you come into a district which for several miles is nothing but pasturage. The steep hill-side is covered with rich soil, with a dense growth of either forest or fern.

17. *The Chairman.*] There is not much land under cultivation?—There is no cultivation, except here and there a paddock for growing oats for the station horses. There is no farming whatever on that portion of the country.

18. The line starts from Waipara?—Yes, the line would start from Waipara and go up the Omihi Flat.

19. No work has been done on that line?—None whatever; nothing beyond the Waipara Station.

20. What line is that which is being made from Waipara through Waikari?—I do not know what the Government call it. Of course it would lead to the Waiau Township through the Weka Pass.

21. Have you any idea of the amount of population in the district through which you have carried your line?—There are just eleven houses in thirty miles. There is no population. There is no settlement; nothing but runs.

22. Is it entirely open country? Is there any timber on it?—There are twelve miles of timber on the twenty-seven miles of my survey.

23. What is the character of the timber?—It is chiefly small birch, manuka, and scrub. It is of no value for timber purposes.

24. Not fit for saw-mill purposes?—Not at all; it is only valuable for sleepers and posts and rails.