

1890.

NEW ZEALAND.

MIDLAND RAILWAY.

PROPOSED DEVIATION NEAR LAKE BRUNNER (REPORT ON, BY MR. C. Y. O'CONNOR, M.INST.C.E.).

Laid on the Table by the Hon. T. Fergus, with the Leave of the House.

Mr. C. Y. O'CONNOR to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

Public Works Office, Wellington, 15th April, 1890.

In accordance with your instructions that I should report upon the proposed deviation of the Midland Railway at Lake Brunner, I have the honour to state that I carefully examined into the question on the ground between the 1st and the 14th ultimo, and since then have collected a large amount of further data on the subject, and have now the honour to report as follows :—

The map attached hereto—P.W.D. 16556A—shows the contract line (in blue) and the proposed deviation (in yellow) in relation to the surrounding districts.

The object sought to be attained is to get better grades than on contract line, and also to get into country which, it is calculated, would yield better results to the railway from an agricultural-settlement and general-traffic point of view.

That the grades on the route now proposed would be better than those on contract line, especially between the eleventh and sixteenth miles, there cannot be any doubt. It is true that grades between these points as good as those on proposed deviation could be attained by a mere local deviation from contract line, as indicated by dotted blue line on the map; but this would entail an additional length of railway of quite two miles, whereas it is alleged that the larger deviation proposed, as indicated by yellow line, would scarcely involve any additional length of railway at all, or, at most, not more than, say, half a mile of additional length.

As regards the country to be served by the railway, I think that the contention of the company is correct—namely, that the deviation will open up a larger area of country suitable for settlement, and more calculated to afford traffic to the railway, than the contract line would do.

In addition to the country actually traversed by the railway, too, the proposed deviation will give better access to a large area of country, more or less suitable for settlement, at the headwaters of Nelson Creek, Bell Hill, and from thence by the Kopara River to the Haupiri and Ahaura flats. The inhabitants of that part of the country are consequently all in favour of the deviation.

As against this, it has been contended on behalf of the inhabitants in the New River district, and also on behalf of the inhabitants of southern Westland, that it would be a great detriment to their interests if the contract line were departed from.

In the case of the inhabitants of the New River district, this contention is based on the assumption that they could get access to the railway on the western shore of Lake Brunner, between the fifteenth and nineteenth miles, by means of roads which would hereafter be made.

I do not think, however, that there is very much in this contention, as the country between Nemona, Marsden, Clifton, and other townships in the New River district, and the shores of Lake Brunner, is very rough, and rises to a considerable height, and connecting roads would therefore probably have steep grades and be costly to construct. Besides this, too, the natural outlet of the whole of this New River country is towards the seaboard, and consequently towards the Hokitika-Greymouth Railway, and Greymouth is its natural market and source of supply.

Even, too, if it were reasonably practicable to obtain their supplies direct from Christchurch, the communities themselves are so small and scattered that they could not, probably, afford to maintain the necessary roads and conveyances which would be requisite to get their supplies in that way; while, on the contrary, means of communication with Greymouth by road are already complete and in full operation, and will probably be further facilitated when the Hokitika-Greymouth Railway is opened from Greymouth to the Teremakau.

As regards access to the southern part of Westland, the contention is that, if the contract line were adhered to, a ready means of access would be afforded by a road or railway from Kumara to a point on Lake Brunner near the twentieth mile on railway-line. This is indicated on map by a green line. There is at present a dray-road for five miles of this distance—namely, from Kumara to Pounamū—and for the remainder of the distance there is a horse-track.

As to a railway along this route, I think it is quite out of the question, as the country is so rough in places that reasonable grades could only be obtained at an excessive cost. A fairly

good dray and coach road could no doubt be obtained along the green route; but it is not, I think, in any case the most favourable means of connection with southern Westland, as explained hereafter.

The best means of connecting the railway with southern Westland is, I think, undoubtedly along the purple line to Kumara, and thence to the Hokitika-Greymouth Railway, with an alternative, indicated by dotted purple line, to Hokitika. Along the route indicated by strong-purple line from the Midland Railway to Kumara, and thence to the Hokitika-Greymouth Railway, a railway could readily be constructed, if found to be justifiable hereafter; and there is at present a first-class coach-road along it from the Midland Railway-line to Kumara, being a portion of the existing coach-road between Hokitika and Christchurch.

It is true that from Kumara to the Midland Railway, along the green line, the distance is only thirteen miles, while by the purple line it is twenty-two miles and a half; but, as against this, there is along the purple line a first-class road, with good grades and an established traffic, which will probably always continue, whereas along the green line the grades are not so good, a considerable portion of the line is merely a horse-track, and it is doubtful if any considerable traffic would ensue upon it, in view of the established traffic and superior advantages of the existing coach-road. Besides this, too, although the road-journey to Kumara would be shorter by the green line, it would involve ten miles additional railway journey.

I should perhaps explain here that I am considering this phase of the question entirely from a Christchurch-to-West-Coast point of view, as I do not apprehend that in any case any one from Kumara or southern Westland would go to the Midland Railway in order to get to Greymouth, the natural route for that traffic being along the Hokitika-Greymouth Railway.

It should also be pointed out that, although the distance from the Midland Railway to Kumara by the green line is some nine or ten miles shorter than by the purple line, it is only three miles shorter to Hokitika, the distance from Hokitika to the Midland Railway at Lake Brunner by the dotted and strong-green lines being thirty-two miles, as compared with the distance from Hokitika to the Midland Railway at the crossing of the Teremakau by the dotted and strong-purple lines, which is thirty-five miles.

As regards existing interests, immediately along the contract and proposed deviation lines themselves, there are very few, and there is only one in which any real hardship would be inflicted—namely, the case of a man named Mitchell, who has an accommodation-house on the bank of Lake Brunner, at the junction of green and blue lines.

In his case, having reckoned for so long on the railway coming past him, it would be, at any rate, an act of grace for the company, if the deviation is granted, to offer him a piece of land, adjacent to the railway and lake, on the deviation line, in exchange for the land he is now in occupation of, and possibly something for moving his house. But there is nobody else who would be materially injured.

Mr. Bruce, who owns the land coloured red on map, between twenty-third and twenty-seventh mile on original line, would, no doubt, feel aggrieved were the railway taken entirely away from him; but, as a matter of fact, the deviation-line comes quite close to one end of his land, and he has therefore all the convenience of the railway without any of the inconveniences which would be involved by severance, &c. He does not, therefore, as I understand him, raise any serious objection to the deviation, as affecting him personally, although he appears to be individually of opinion that the original line is the best one. A letter, which he has written to the Hon. the Premier on the subject, is attached hereto.

On the whole, therefore, I am of opinion that the advantages to be obtained by the deviation, which are very considerable, are very much greater than the disadvantages of abandoning the original line, which are very slight, and I would therefore recommend that the deviation be assented to.

This recommendation is of course on the assumption that the deviation-line, on final survey, turns out, as is anticipated, to be only very slightly longer than original line; and also on the assumption that the grades turn out to be very much better than on the original line. As to the latter item, however, I have no doubt at all.

I have, &c.,

C. Y. O'CONNOR,

Under-Secretary for Public Works.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works, Wellington.

P.S.—As the works on the proposed deviation would undoubtedly be cheaper than on the original line, there should be a saving in land-grant if the deviation is permitted, and it would be well to get the company to agree to this before authorising the deviation, if approved.—C. Y. O'C.

Enclosure.

Mr. T. W. BRUCE to the Hon. the PREMIER.

SIR,—

Inchbourne, Lake Brunner, 10th March, 1890.

As Mr. O'Connor has been here making inquiries on behalf of the Government, *re* deviation of the Midland Railway Company's line at Lake Brunner, as a resident who has a large stake in the future development of the district, I venture to put my views of the matter before you, and hope that it will not be deemed presumption.

In my opinion the new line does not open up the country so well as the old line, and simply avoids the fine scenery at Lake Brunner.

The questions of cost, grade, and distance apart, the old line opens up more land for present and future development. Near the lake it is dry, and the beaches are nicer, and it is far more attractive for settlement and building-sites, and it seems certain that it will pay to gather timber up to it for a far greater distance seaward and southerly than if the timber had to be hauled up to the lake, and thence across it to line upon the eastern side.

It appears to be a mistake to take the line on the eastern side of the lake, to open up the lesser quantity of forest-land, and leave the greater quantity upon the western side, to be hauled to the lake, and thence over it to the new line, the future prosperity of Westland being largely bound up in the way opportunities are given by the locating of this railway-line for successfully carrying out the timber industry.

The great bulk of the low and workable forest-country lies between Lake Brunner and the sea, and southerly; consequently, the deviation takes the line further away from the centre, and travels nearer the edge of the country to be opened up.

The old line would also open up granite-quarries near the mouth of the Orangapuku. In the valley of the Orangapuku there is a considerable extent of land suitable for farming, part of which I pointed out to Mr. O'Connor; and the slopes of the mountains will add considerably to the useful area of land in this valley, as they are not too steep to work, and clothed with excellent timber for a long distance up.

On the new line the land near the lake on the eastern side is low and marshy, and not attractive for settlement; and the forest-country in the lower valley of the Crooked River and Poerua River (Deep Creek) would be reasonably well served by the old line on the western side of the lake, and the land in the upper part of the Crooked River Valley and Poerua Valley would be reasonably well served by the station at the junction of the Greenstone-Lake Brunner Track with the track from the Grey Valley *via* Bell Hill, near the Teremakau. There is also a considerable area of good land for farming in the Poerua and Upper Crooked River Valleys; but the slopes of the hills are in many places too steep to work, and will not add much to the useful area of country. It is only fair to add that, should the new line be adopted, the above-named station would serve reasonably well the land in the Orangapuku Valley.

The old line runs so as to show off excellently the fine scenery of Lake Brunner; and when this and the bold and striking scenery in the Gorge of the Waimakariri is added to the already well-known and famous gorges of the Otira and Bealey, the company have a large asset in scenery, and surely the question ought to be well weighed before the finest and most attractive part of it is lightly thrown away.

I would respectfully suggest that the question be not decided until the new survey is finished, and the whole advantages and disadvantages of the two lines can be contrasted; and I would advocate this course to the extent of the Government paying half the cost of survey if the new line is rejected.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

T. W. BRUCE.

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and from the fact that the only person who was seen by the witness at the time of the shooting was the man who was shot.