

1900.
NEW ZEALAND.

NORTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF).

(MR. JOHN STEVENS, CHAIRMAN.)

Report brought up on the 16th October and ordered to be printed.

ORDER OF REFERENCE.

Extract from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

WEDNESDAY, THE 22ND DAY OF AUGUST, 1900.

Ordered, "That a Select Committee be appointed, with power to call for persons and papers, to consist of Mr. Field, Mr. Fisher, Mr. Hogg, Mr. Lethbridge, Mr. Massey, Mr. Napier, and the Mover, three to form a quorum, for the purpose of obtaining information and reporting to this House,—(1) The amount of money still unexpended on actual construction of the work out of the original sum borrowed for the purpose of completing the North Island Main Trunk line of Railway *via* the Central route from Auckland to Wellington; (2) the length of line fully or partially constructed, its cost and productiveness, as also the loss of interest to the colony on those portions of the line which are still uncompleted; (3) the probable amount of settlement which is likely to take place along and near the line, and the value to the colony of the timber-forests proposed to be made accessible for milling purposes by the completion of the line; (4) the probable time within which railway communication will be established between Wellington and Auckland at the present rate of progress, and also the approximate time within which such communication could be established if a sufficient sum of money were devoted to the work for the purpose of having it expeditiously and vigorously carried on, either under the co-operative system of work or by contract, or either or both of these systems; and to make such recommendations to the Government as the Committee may deem best in the interests of the colony, and to report the result of its deliberations to the House within two months from the day of the date of the Committee's first sitting.—(MR. STEVENS.)

REPORT.

I HAVE the honour, by direction of the Committee, to report that Mr. H. J. H. Blow, Under-Secretary for Public Works, has given evidence of an exhaustive and valuable character relative to the various routes proposed and under construction, the length of line at present in progress, the approximate time within which the Makohine and Mangaweka Viaducts are likely to be completed, and the further period required to extend the line to Ohakune. Mr. Blow estimates that the line will be completed as far as the latter point within three years from the present date.

From the evidence of both Mr. Blow and Mr. J. W. A. Marchant, Commissioner of Crown Lands, your Committee is of opinion that the suggested route from Ohakune to Ongaruru, *via* Ohara, is impracticable, and that no deviation should be made from the line already surveyed.

The report of Mr. Murray, Surveyor to the Lands Department, who made a careful inspection of the vast forests in the Waimarino, shows that there is an area of 91,000 acres of good milling timber. This extends about twenty miles along the line, and, as the country is fairly level and the timber area is within six miles of the line on either side, the construction of the railway as proposed will greatly help the sawmilling industry, and render the forest timber an extremely valuable asset to the State.

Mr. Blow estimates that the value of the milling timber, at 1s. per 100 ft. royalty, would pay for the construction of the line twice over.

The amount expended on the railway between the junction at Marton and Te Awamutu is £692,300, and the estimated amount to complete the work is £1,165,000.

It is considered that at the present rate of progress the Makohine Viaduct will be completed within a year. This will enable the line to be finished as far as Mangaweka.

The estimated cost of altering the curves and grades between Marton and Stratford, for the purpose of making that line equal to the Central line, is £271,130.

The Committee are of opinion that the Central route is by far the best and most suitable for the following reasons:—

1. It is the shortest by fifty-one miles.
2. It avoids the heavy grades of open line from Turakina to Waitotara, and the lesser grades between the latter place and Hawera.
3. The rises and falls are reduced by 1,128 ft.
4. The journey between Wellington and Auckland can be performed in a very much shorter time, because (a) the distance is shorter; (b) there are fewer rises to haul trains up; (c) the line is a better running one, as the grades and curves are easier, thus allowing of greater speed.
5. The grades are flatter over the greater part of the distance.