

reason that it traverses throughout its entire length, and thereby opens up, a large area of rich pastoral land of uniform quality, capable of carrying a large population when removed from its present isolation.

We, however, desire to bring under your notice for favourable consideration the said middle route, provided on further examination it is found to be practicable, for the reason that it would serve the same country on the west of the Tangihua Range as would be served by the said western route; and it would have the further advantage of being in a good position for an easy and short branch-rail connection with the Whangarei-Kawakawa system, passing through Maungakaramaea, and practically serving all the rich lands on the east of the Tangihua Range beyond the reach of the Main Trunk Railway.

The probable cost of construction of the said line from McCarroll's Gap to a junction with the Kawakawa-Kaikohe Railway section by each of the three said proposed routes would approximately be the same—that is to say, about £700,000, the distance being about sixty-one miles.

(2.) (a.) We are of opinion that after the North of Auckland Main Trunk Railway has been completed, as before stated, a branch line should be constructed to connect it with the Whangarei-Kawakawa line at the south end. We believe this to be advisable in order to fully develop the country, and by so doing we anticipate a considerable through-traffic would result. We recommend that it take precedence over other branch lines north of Auckland.

(b.) We are of opinion that the time is premature for the making of any recommendation as to the connection of the Dargaville-Kaihu Railway with the North of Auckland Main Trunk line.

We desire to recommend that all large blocks of land, whether owned by Europeans or Natives, lying on the route of the North of Auckland Main Trunk Railway or adjacent thereto, and likely to be affected in value by the construction of the line, be acquired by the Crown without delay for closer settlement.

We have the honour to forward herewith a copy of the evidence submitted to the Commission as recorded by the official reporters.

We have the honour to be

Your Excellency's most obedient servants,

VERNON H. REED, Chairman.

LEWIS P. BECROFT,

JOHN COOM,

WM. EVANS,

T. RONAYNE,

JOHN STALLWORTHY,

T. H. STEADMAN.

Auckland, Thursday, the 11th day of May 1911.