

REPORT.

To His Excellency Viscount Jellicoe, Governor-General of the Dominion of New Zealand.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the Commissioners appointed by Your Excellency to inquire into the several matters and things mentioned and referred to in the Commission, a copy of which is attached hereto, have the honour to report as follows :—

We held our first meeting in Wellington on Friday, the 19th November, 1920, when preliminary evidence was given on behalf of the Public Works Department, and plans of the various routes proposed by the Department for our consideration were submitted and studied.

We left Wellington on Sunday, the 21st November, and, having taken evidence at Auckland, subsequently visited and heard evidence at Dargaville, Paparoa, Whangarei, Kohukohu, Rawene, Broadwood, Herekino, Kaitaia, Victoria Valley, Peria, Mangonui, Whangaroa, and Kawakawa. In addition to the sworn evidence received, the members of the Commission interviewed a large number of persons, including officers of the Public Works Department and of local bodies, from whom they obtained advice and opinions on the subject of the inquiry.

The Commission arrived in Wellington on Thursday, the 16th December, when further consultations were held with departmental officers; and a final meeting was held in Wellington on Saturday, the 15th January, 1921.

In addition to visiting the places at which evidence was taken, the Commission travelled, as far as it was practicable, either over the routes of the railways suggested or over so much of the country as enabled it to form a sound judgment as to the character of the land through which the railway-lines were proposed to be taken, and also as to the producing-capacity of the areas to be served by the proposed lines. Amongst other places visited in the course of this portion of its proceedings were Pukehuia, Tangowahine, Tangiteroria, Pohoatua, Ruawai, Raupo, Matakohē, Arapohue, Mangarata, Horeke, Rangiahua, Mangamuka, Port Awanui, Unahi, Takahue, Taipa, Otangaroa, Kaeo, Opuā, Oakleigh, Waikiekie, and Waiotira Junction.

RAILWAY ROUTES : DARGAVILLE—MAIN TRUNK.

The inquiry may be divided into two portions; and we propose to deal first with the point referred to in the second paragraph of the order of reference, wherein the duty is placed on us of inquiring into and ascertaining the best route along which a railway connecting the Kaihu Valley Railway with the North Auckland Main Trunk Railway should be constructed in the interests of settlement, whilst giving due consideration to engineering questions and the volume and direction of traffic.

Four suggestions have been made in connection with this branch of the inquiry: the first (see route coloured red on the plan and shown as numbered 1) that a railway-line should be carried to the northward of the Wairoa River from Dargaville to Kirikopuni, which route was submitted to us with two alternative deviations, shown on the plan as numbered 2 in red dotted lines.

The second proposal (coloured blue on the plan and shown as numbered 3) connects Dargaville with Pukehuia, on the North Auckland Main Trunk Railway, by a line crossing the Wairoa River above Dargaville and thence continuing on the south side of the river to the point where it joins the Main Trunk Railway at Pukehuia. An alternative route to this line was suggested and has been investigated (shown in dotted blue lines and numbered 4).

The third proposal (coloured green on the plan and shown as route numbered 5) involves a bridge crossing the Wairoa River at Dargaville; and the railway, traversing the valley of the Mangonui River, would join the Main Trunk Railway at a point about 113 miles on the railage of that authorized railway.

The fourth proposed line (coloured purple on the plan and shown as route numbered 6) also crosses the Wairoa River by a bridge at Dargaville, and runs on