

railway system for Imperial reasons we consider that there is no necessity to make any connection with the railway system other than that at present existing at the Bay of Islands and at Whangarei.

ROAD-MAINTENANCE.

The Commission desires to call Your Excellency's attention to a matter which was forced upon their observation in many districts through which they travelled during the progress of this inquiry. They learnt with regret that many of the roads which had been formed and metalled at a total or partial expense to the Government had been allowed to lapse into a state of disrepair by the local authority responsible for their upkeep, and therefore the expenditure by the State on those roads had been largely thrown away. This loss has occurred through a want of local care and of suitable expenditure of funds at the right time.

We are of opinion that this is a serious matter, and one deserving of grave consideration by your Government, with a view to discovering some method by which roads once constructed and metalled shall be maintained from time to time in a state of efficiency. After making all allowance on account of the difficulties existing owing to the recent war, we are of opinion that this neglect in the maintenance of roads is not an ephemeral matter, but one that has existed over a long period of years.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, we summarize our recommendations as follows:—

- (1.) That the northern route of railway between Dargaville and the Main Trunk line be carried out on the route as shown by the full red line on the attached plan, the North Auckland Main Trunk Railway already authorized between a point south of Pukehuia and Kirikopuni being deviated to the western side of the Wairoa River at a point near Pohoatua.
- (2.) That the Main Trunk line be extended as far as Mangamuka, and at present no further.
- (3.) That the authorized communications by rail to deep water are sufficient.
- (4.) That work be suspended on the Main Trunk line between the proposed junction with the suggested Dargaville Branch at Pohoatua and Ngapuhi, but that a main road be constructed between these points.
- (5.) That means should be devised to ensure that where Government funds have been contributed to form or metal roads such roads should be properly maintained.

We have the honour to transmit herewith the evidence and exhibits submitted to the Commission, and the minutes of our proceedings.

We have, &c.,

WILLIAM FERGUSON, Chairman. [SEAL.]

JOHN BIRD HINE. [SEAL.]

JAMES BEGG. [SEAL.]

Wellington, 15th January, 1921.

Note by Clerk of the House.

The evidence, exhibits, and minutes of proceedings were not laid on the table of the House.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (525 copies), £12 01s.

By Authority: MARCUS F. MARKS, Government Printer, Wellington.—1921.

Price 3d.]