

It is a reasonable assumption to make that the land will carry a sheep and a half to the acre, giving a total of, say, 320,000 sheep. The revenue from this can be estimated as follows:—

								Freight. £
Outward—								
Sheep, 110,000	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2,640
Wool, 5,600 bales	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	700
Inward—								
Manures, 500 tons	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	150
Coal, 300 tons	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	90
Merchandise, 3,000 tons	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2,700
Passengers, 12,000	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1,660
								<hr/> £7,850 <hr/>

This has been taken on a liberal scale, and is not likely to be any greater than shown for a great many years. The estimated cost of running this traffic is £3,050 per annum, making a net revenue of £4,800. On the same scale of traffic returns based on acreage, the Wharerata route should show a net revenue of £1,200.

The advantage gained by the Ngatapa route from local traffic and on a monetary basis is £3,600. This will earn interest on a sum of £72,000. It hardly seems necessary to say any more by way of comparison between the two routes.

In my opinion there is no justification for doing anything more on the Ngatapa route, not even to complete the survey. The Wharerata route should now, however, be properly surveyed, and a strong party should be put on to this work. As soon as this survey is completed work should be commenced as vigorously on this line as on the railway between Napier and Wairoa. I consider the through railway from Napier to Gisborne will be a paying proposition, but at no stage in its progress between these places is it likely to pay its way; therefore it should be constructed as quickly as possible.

With regard to the opening-up of the land lying along the Ngatapa route, this can be quite satisfactorily done by a good metalled road from Ngatapa to Wairoa, passing through Hangaroa, Timiroto, and Te Reinga. There are about 32 miles of this road from Te Reinga to Ngatapa still to be metalled. This would cost probably £2,500 per mile to widen and metal, making the total cost approximately £80,000.

I consider this would be the better way to open up the country, and is quite sufficient for the trade of the district. It would pay the country to contribute the whole of this money rather than to construct the railway along this route.

4th August, 1924.

J. WOOD, Inspecting Engineer.

Gisborne-Wairoa Railway.

Hon. Minister of Public Works.

IN connection with the above railway, you will recollect that some time ago Mr. Wood, Inspecting Engineer, after visiting the district in connection with the extreme difficulty that was being experienced with slips on the Ngatapa Section, reported that it appeared to him that even at this late stage the question of whether the railway should go by Ngatapa at all should be seriously reconsidered. Instructions were therefore given to have flying surveys made of possible other routes via Oputama and Wharerata, or via the Nuhaka Valley and Wharerata. The result of these investigations and further exploration in connection with the Ngatapa-Hangaroa route have been made, and it now appears that there is such a difference in the costs between the two lines that the expenditure of any further money beyond Ngatapa should be immediately stopped, and detail surveys made of the Nuhaka route in order to ascertain definitely that the railway can be built for the figures estimated.

Investigations as far as they go seem to indicate that only in one factor is the Ngatapa route superior. Shortly, the Nuhaka-Wharerata route is 11 miles shorter in through distance, and involves the construction of 21 miles less new railway, and its cost for construction will be approximately £600,000 less; in other words, it will only be two-thirds of the Ngatapa costs. The Ngatapa line will take approximately three years longer to construct, and would thus involve further interest charges of over £200,000, in addition to the £600,000 indicated.

Coming now to the question of the extra country served: The position is indicated on a lithograph (P.W.D. 60293) attached; and, allowing the carrying-capacity of the country served by the inland route on a reasonable basis, it appears that the advantages in the way of traffic from local sources along the Ngatapa route would pay interest on a sum of approximately £72,000. From this it will be seen that, even if this estimate were in error five times, it would still be insufficient to pay half the difference between the two routes herein contrasted.

In considering the advantages of the Nuhaka route above I omitted to mention that, while the grades are equal in each case, the summit-level by the Wharerata route is 140 ft. less than that by the Ngatapa route.

In view of the figures put forward, I recommend that work beyond Ngatapa be immediately stopped, except in so far as is necessary to secure the work already done and to remove the plant; that the surveys of the Nuhaka-Wharerata route be vigorously pushed on with, and that as soon as these are sufficiently advanced the heaviest work be put in hand; and that provision be made for a first-class road to serve the Hangaroa country, which would have been served by the route now being followed by the railway: the cost of this road (a great part of which is already made) would be approximately £80,000. Really, the country along this road might be expected to assist in the construction, particularly the metalling; but, in view of the fact that they have in the past been led to expect a railway, they would probably not view any request for a contribution favourably, and I therefore recommend that the Government accept the position and announce that they intend to make a first-class road. Even though the road were to cost twice as much as I have indicated, and the trade from that area be five times more than I have estimated, the Nuhaka-Wharerata route, on the score of first cost and later operation and maintenance expenses, would be much the better.

30th August, 1924.

F. W. FURKERT.

Gisborne-Napier Railway.

Mr. Furkert.

WITH reference to the figures and information supplied by the deputation from Gisborne and Wairoa on the question of alternative routes for the railway between Gisborne and Wairoa, I have examined them, and, although I think the figures are much exaggerated, for purposes of comparison I will accept them as correct.

The deputation says 420,000 sheep would be carried on the country supplied by the railway along the Ngatapa route, instead of the 320,000 as stated by me. This would increase my revenue figures for sheep and wool by £1,100.

If we take the land said by the deputation to be opened up as 350,000 acres, instead of the 215,000 acres given by me, on this basis we might expect the outward revenue to be increased by £2,200 and inward by £2,000. This allows for 525,000 sheep on the land. Mr. Lysnar, M.P., says 500,000 acres will be opened up, but I have not taken account of this, as this area is far too large. In any case I have taken more than the number of sheep given by the deputation.