

arrived at, from the mere knowledge given by the map of the vast extent over which its people are distributed. In a country so great, possessing inland resources situated at immense distances from the points of export, no other form of communication than railways could possibly provide for the traffic which exists. I believe in many inland districts, they were the first and only means of thorough communication provided by the State. Thus, railways to America are indispensable; and her patriotic people, seeing that this is so, are content to put up with great personal inconvenience to secure the welfare of the nation.

In Britain, the first railways were commenced under very different auspices. There, with a maximum distance of 80 miles from the interior to the sea, an almost perfect network of roads existed before railways came into operation, and the people saw in them only a more rapid means for the conveyance of the traffic, which, up to that time at any rate, had been efficiently carried without them. It was also known that, once established, railways would possess a monopoly, so, while securing the luxury they promised to confer, care was taken to prevent their becoming a nuisance.

In New Zealand, it is true, no such network of roads exist as were in Britain at the period of the first railways; but our geographical condition, namely, the maximum distance which produce has to be carried, is somewhat similar, and the question arises whether the Legislature would be justified, or the people hereafter be satisfied, in the adoption of a form of structure for a small locality which involved any impediment to the ordinary traffic.

Westland presents perhaps the most striking example of any local traffic which exists in New Zealand. Here the greatest distance from the foot of the main ranges to the sea does not exceed 20 miles, and the greatest distance which produce would have to be carried to a port is only 35 miles. With the exception of one main line of railway from the Brunner Coal Mines, following the sea beach southwards, all the internal traffic could readily be carried by drays; and I believe that the establishment of railway lines from the ranges to the sea would scarcely even be remunerative, and would even be unpopular if they caused delay and danger by level crossings, or frequent intersections of the road lines.

I fear, Sir, that I have gone beyond my proper sphere while commenting upon these subjects, but it was almost impossible for my remarks to be purely professional, the subject itself being so general.

I have, &c.,

H. H. Lahman, Esq., County Chairman, &c.

CHARLES Y. O'CONNOR, C.E.

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