

I think, also, that some further and more complete scientific exploration of the Mount Rochfort coal field would be desirable before the precise route and terminus of the line are decided upon, as it appears to be not improbable that workable seams of coal may be discovered in a more accessible position than those hitherto examined, and that the cost of the line might thereby be brought largely under the sum estimated by Mr. Wrigg.

I have, therefore, to suggest that in the event of the Colonial Government and the Assembly consenting to the execution of this work, its actual construction should be preceded, not only by additional exploration and survey beyond that made by Mr. Wrigg, but by a careful examination of the Mount Rochfort coal field itself, by the officers of the Colonial Geological Department.

I have, &c.,

OSWALD CURTIS,
Superintendent.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

* Nelson Gazette, No. 20, of 23rd April, 1868.

Enclosure 1 in No. 7.

RESOLUTIONS passed by the Provincial Council of Nelson on Tuesday, 2nd May, 1871.

1. That in the opinion of this Council, it is highly desirable that the line of railway from Cobden to the Brunner coal mine should be constructed without delay.
2. That in the opinion of this Council it is highly desirable that the line of railway from Nelson to Foxhill should be constructed without delay.

Enclosure 2 in No. 7.

RESOLUTION passed by the Provincial Council of Nelson on Friday, 26th May, 1871.

THAT in the opinion of this Council, it is highly desirable that a line of railway from Westport to the Mount Rochfort coal field should be constructed under the authority of, and in the manner provided by, the Public Works and Immigration Act.

Enclosure 3 in No. 7.

REPORT of the Select Committee of the Nelson Provincial Council, on the best means of developing the Mount Rochfort Coal Field.

YOUR Committee, in dealing with the subject submitted to them for inquiry, have done so with an eminent sense of the extent and value of the inquiries which have already been made in connection with the same subject by Select Committees of the Council, and by scientific men, who, at different periods, were specially selected for the purpose by the Provincial Government.

Acquaintance with the recommendations of these several Committees and Commissioners considerably relieved your Committee from the necessity for carrying out any close inquiry as to the characteristics of the coal field, or as to the description of works best calculated to promote its development. According to all the reports furnished to the Council, and according to the now very generally distributed information on the subject, the coal field in question is quite exceptional in the Colony, by its vast extent and by the superior quality of the coal; and the one desideratum in connection with its development, seems to be the construction of a line of railway from the most conveniently approached point of the field—first to the port of Westport, and ultimately to any main line of rail laid down between the two Provincial termini, Nelson and Cobden.

The obstacles which have hitherto existed in the way of such a work being undertaken, have been high, and your Committee are disposed to believe, exaggerated estimate formed as to the cost of constructing a sufficiently suitable railway from Mount Rochfort to Westport, and the absence of adequate encouragement, by guaranteed interest or otherwise, to any company of capitalists who might be prepared to undertake that work solely, without reference to the general proposal of a railway from Nelson to the West Coast.

Your Committee consider that a further and close examination of the country, undertaken with a view to the construction of the lighter forms of railway, or wire tramway, now so generally recommended as the works most suitable for similar situations, would result in demonstrating that sufficient facilities for the conveyance of coal from the mine to Westport might be furnished at a much lower cost than that indicated in existing estimates. Though they have no actual evidence before them that such would be the case, they feel justified in coming to that conclusion by their partial knowledge of the situation, and by a comparison of the results in similar situations where the more modern systems of railway construction have been adopted. They are further justified in doing so by the statement contained in Mr. Wrigg's report, that, in the actual construction of the proposed railway, the discovery of coal in closer proximity to Westport is a highly probable contingency.

And with regard to the best means of encouraging the construction of such works, and thereby developing this valuable coal field, your Committee consider that ample primary provision for that purpose is made by two measures, passed during the last Session of the General Assembly, "The Immigration and Public Works Act, 1870;" and they venture to consider that, if advantage is to be taken of these Acts, (*sic*) with a proper regard for the general interest of the Province, and with an equal regard for the development of a portion of the public estate, which is of the highest value to the Colony as a whole, the construction of a railway from the Rochfort Coal Field to the port of Westport, either as a separate line, or as an integral and essential portion of the Nelson and West Coast Railway, is one of the works which should be specially recommended by the Council to His Excellency the Governor.