

and Surveys to be made.

afford the best possible guarantee against acts of wanton outrage like the one we have recently had to deplore. The survey for a line is at present made only as far as Ngaruawahia. The Government propose to extend that survey; and they propose also, to take authority to construct the whole of the line, although it is not possible at present to state its cost. It is expected that the cost, including bridges, will not exceed £4,500 a mile.

Additional Expenditure on authorized Railways.

The Government will ask the House to sanction additional expenditure, to the extent of £100,000, upon the railway between New Plymouth and Wanganui—or, rather, since provision has been made for the line between New Plymouth and the Waitara, the additional provision will be for the line from the Waitara to Wanganui. As was stated last Session by the Minister for Public Works, the object of the Government will be to proceed with this railway concurrently with the progress of settlement.

Connection of Marlborough, Nelson, and Westland with Trunk Line.

Foxhill to the Brunner: Nelson Proposals.

These proposals deal with the question of a trunk line through the North Island, as far as it is desirable to deal with it at present; and also with the trunk line through the Middle Island from North Kowai, in the Province of Canterbury, to the most southerly port of that Island, the Bluff. But they leave untouched the requirements of a considerable portion of the Middle Island. They leave unconnected Marlborough, Nelson, and Westland. Honorable Members are aware that, for coal-mining purposes, a line from the Brunner to Greymouth has already been sanctioned; and that a line from Nelson to Foxhill has been contracted for. During the recess, Ministers have had interviews and much correspondence with gentlemen desirous of seeing the railway extended from Foxhill to the Brunner. It was very pleasing to the Government to observe the spirit of enterprise displayed by the inhabitants of Nelson, in their desire to obtain this railway. At first, indeed, their idea was to construct it out of moneys to be locally subscribed; but subsequently we were asked to construct it on the same conditions as apply to other lines, except that there should be given the additional security of 10,000 acres of land per mile of railway. Without delay, we caused an examination of the land to be made. The report of the officer appointed to make the examination will be printed, and copies will be supplied to honorable Members. The result of the examination has satisfied the Government that the land—in the absence of fuller knowledge as to its probable mineral wealth—does not afford adequate security for the cost of the railway. The land has a certain amount of value, because of the timber upon it; but the timber-bearing area available for use is limited. The true value of the land can only be ascertained by investigating its mineral resources. If, assuming the existence of these resources, the construction of a railway were now authorized, its course might, and probably would, ultimately prove not to be one favourable to the development of the mineral wealth of the district. The Government have therefore determined that, at present, they will not do more than ask the House to authorize a thorough examination of the land, including a preliminary survey for a line of railway. They recognize that, apart from the question whether there are mineral resources in the district, it will sooner or later become necessary, in order to the completion of a trunk line through the Middle Island, that Nelson and the West Coast should be connected by railway. But there would still remain a gap in the means of communication; and it is one concerning which most urgent representations have been made. The importance of connecting the east and west coasts of the Middle Island is fully admitted by the Government. Not only will such a connection be the means of opening up to mining enterprise a great deal of interior country; but it will open to the commercial centres on the east coast the means of supplying the west coast—a market which has hitherto been almost monopolized by the merchants of Melbourne. I have to announce, therefore, that the Government will propose that the survey operations shall not be confined to the contemplated line between Foxhill and the Brunner, but shall include such a survey as will ascertain the best course for a railway to connect the east and west coasts of the Island, and of bringing them into connection with the line to the northern portion of the

Government Proposals as to that Line.