

1873.

NEW ZEALAND.

PETITION OF INHABITANTS OF WESTLAND

FOR A RAILWAY CONNECTING THE EAST AND WEST COASTS OF THE MIDDLE ISLAND.

Presented 7th August, 1873, and ordered to be printed.

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives,
in Parliament assembled.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF THE UNDERSIGNED INHABITANTS OF WESTLAND SHEWETH,—

That the County of Westland contains a population of 15,500 souls, and the adjacent Nelson South-West Gold Fields a population of upwards of 9,000 souls.

That the districts named are known as the West Coast Gold Fields, and that their occupation commenced about nine years since.

That during their brief existence they have contributed largely to the Colonial revenue, and have materially added to the wealth and prosperity of the Colony.

That the gold already exported from the West Coast amounts in value to £11,000,000 sterling, and that, from the wide extent of ascertained auriferous ground (without taking into account quartz reefs), a large yield of the precious metal, for many years to come, may be calculated upon with certainty.

That the coast contains some of the most valuable coal formations in the Colony, and abounds with forests of excellent timber.

That the export trade in coal and timber is assuming considerable dimensions, and, with requisite facilities, admits of indefinite expansion.

That, during the year 1872, the coal exported from Greymouth, notwithstanding the difficulties of transit from the mine to the port, amounted to 13,000 tons; while the timber exported from the port of Hokitika alone, during the same period, amounted to nearly 6,000,000 superficial feet, of the value of £21,000.

That the foregoing facts conclusively establish the permanence of the West Coast as a settled and important portion of the Colony, and dispel all doubts as to the future in store for it.

That from causes which your Petitioners deem it unnecessary to particularize, the West Coast has hitherto been regarded, and not unfrequently described, as a “suburb of Melbourne,” and that its exclusion from the Colonial scheme of railways now in progress, favours the impression that it is regarded in some such light by the Colonial Legislature.

That a line of railway connecting the West Coast with the older settlements on the East Coast, would be mutually advantageous to the people more immediately concerned, and be pregnant with incalculable advantages to the Colony.

That, so far back as 1867, the Provincial Council of Canterbury passed a resolution affirming the desirability of such a railway.

That among other advantages to be derived from its construction, your Petitioners humbly submit the following:—

- 1st. The line proposed would be the means of opening up and settling a large extent of valuable country that must otherwise continue, as at present, in a state of primeval solitude.
- 2nd. It would connect large centres of population—a most promising, if not necessary, element to the success of railway construction.
- 3rd. It would open an extensive market of consumers to the producers on the East Coast, and furnish a much required additional outlet for the coal and timber with which the West Coast abounds, and which the East Coast so much needs.
- 4th. It would form an essential link in the main trunk line of railways, which it is understood by your Petitioners will ultimately stretch from Nelson in the North to Invercargill in the South, running the entire length of the Island.

5th. It would dispel the misgivings entertained as to the inhabitants of the West Coast being regarded by the Legislature rather as temporary sojourners than as ordinary colonists, and have a direct and potent influence in promoting settlement.

That the unalienated lands of Westland offer an ample and substantial security for the repayment of the cost of such portion of the railway proposed as may be constructed within her boundaries.

That uncertainty exists as to the route by which the proposed junction of the East and West Coast should be effected, and the following have been represented as practicable, viz. :—1st, *viâ* the Amuri; 2nd, *viâ* Hurunui; 3rd, *viâ* Porter's Pass; 4th, *viâ* Browning's Pass; and 5th, *viâ* Whitecombe's Pass.

That it is expedient to take the necessary steps to ascertain which route is the most feasible, and at the same time would confer the largest advantages, before deciding as to any, and that your Petitioners desire to see this important question settled on broad grounds, regardless of local feeling.

Your Petitioners therefore pray that your honourable House will take into serious consideration the importance of connecting the East and West Coast by railway, and will cause the necessary surveys to be made with a view to deciding as to the best and most practical route for the same.

And your Petitioners will ever pray, &c.

[Here follow 1,824 signatures.]

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