

figures I am about to quote are based upon the ascertained mileage cost of the railways that have been constructed in different parts of the colony. Upon this basis, the following estimates of cost are arrived at:—

	£
Wellington to Foxton	410,000
Waitotara River to Upper Patea Crossing	357,000
Te Awamutu to Inglewood	1,115,000
Masterton to Papatu <i>vid</i> Woodville	630,000
Waikato to the Thames	168,000
Branch Line to Hamilton	10,000
Helensville to Kaukapakapa River	25,000
Wangarei to Kamo (7½ miles)	30,000
Total	£2,775,000

If we add to this the amount required to complete lines already authorized, namely, £958,000, we shall have a total of £3,733,000 for North Island Railways.

The construction of the line through the Waikato country, estimated, as I have said, to cost £1,115,000, will, it is hoped, be fully warranted by the acquisition of considerable areas of land suitable for settlement. I understand that the line will run through some of the finest land in New Zealand; and, from what has passed between the Hon. the Premier, the Hon. the Native Minister, and the Natives concerned, there is good reason to hope that the acquisition of the necessary land will be successfully negotiated. If those Natives have a just conception of the vast revenue which will accrue to them after parting with sufficient land whereby to construct this railway, they will not hesitate for a moment to enter heartily into a transaction which is bound to increase the value of the land which will be left to them very many fold. Moreover, they may earn a large amount of money by devoting their labour to the construction of the line, and there is good reason to believe that large numbers of them will gladly accept the useful employment which the construction of this line will afford.

The construction of the Wellington-Foxton line will, to some extent, be contingent upon the acquisition of land from the Native owners. In addition to an area of 300,000 acres of Maori land, 180,000 acres of which have been under negotiation for some time, the line will render available for settlement 100,000 acres now in the hands of the Crown; and there can be no doubt that, taken together, these lands will ultimately realise an amount which will go far towards covering the cost of the proposed railway. I know there may be considerable difference of opinion amongst honorable members with regard to this line; but I think that, apart from any advantages it may of itself yield, by enabling the country between Wellington and Foxton to be beneficially occupied, it is extremely desirable that it should be made, as part of the main trunk line which is to connect Wellington with Auckland. If the two great centres, Wellington and Auckland, are to be efficiently connected by railway, this Wellington to Foxton portion must be constructed at some time. I believe it to be well that we should accept the conclusion that that connection has to be made: and if so, I think the Parliament and the people will agree with me, that the sooner it is done the better it will be for the country. It will be seen from one of the Appendices to this Statement, that during the recess the question of the best route from Wellington to Foxton has occupied the attention of the Public Works Department; and of this, honorable gentlemen may rest assured, that, assuming the Government should be enabled to undertake the work, it will not be commenced until there has been a further, and a most thorough, investigation as to the best route to be adopted. It will thus be seen that our proposals embrace one main line of communication on the West Coast from Wellington to Auckland and the Thames, and another on the East Coast, Wellington to Napier. To make the system complete, it remains but to establish a connection between these two main lines by means of a short link of 12 miles between Bunnythorpe and Woodville. This would place Napier, and nearly all the East Coast country, in communication, not merely with Wellington, but also with Manawatu, Wanganui, New Plymouth, and Auckland. The probable cost of this link would be £119,000, and there can be little doubt that sooner or later this work will be undertaken.