

Mr. Wylde.
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bring in the largest amount of traffic. That would apply to this case; a line along the beach would only draw from one side, and a line through the country would draw a traffic from both sides. This is the more serious, because the line along the beach passes along an utterly unsettled and valueless country. I would reject it at once as being utterly useless. I have gone carefully into the matter, and cannot see that the line along the beach would be of the slightest use to the country. It would never pay for running an engine along it unless these branches are made. If the branches are made they require an additional length of fourteen miles.

223. *Mr. McLean.*] The two branches?—Yes; and then they would not supply the country fairly. For instance, Kumara is far the largest centre for mining operations and settlement. You would have to go from Hokitika to Teremakau, and then back again up the branch line to Kumara, so that every ton of goods from that port would be handicapped, if I can so express it, very heavily. In that case the total length of line to be made would be twelve miles along the beach and fourteen miles—twenty-six miles. By striking out the useless part of the line along the beach, and joining the two branches, we have a line twenty-one miles long, and a saving of between five and six miles.

224. *Mr. Seddon.*] Do you know what would be the cost of plant necessary to work these two branches—trucks, and so forth?—It would depend entirely upon how the lines were worked. The main line being useless, it could be considered only as a portion of the branches. I think you would want an extra engine on one of the branches, and extra trucks. I suppose it would take from £7,000 to £8,000, more or less.

225. Well, there would be additional expense, would there not, for each of these branch lines, assuming there are two locomotives?—Yes; there would be additional labour required for the engine-driver, stoker, guards, men at the points at each place. It would probably entail, at least, an additional ten men to work it.

226. Would £50 a mile be a fair charge for a survey of that country right through?—Fifty pounds a mile for the deviation?

227. Yes.—Fifty pounds a mile would be far more than is ever paid now. I consider that would be an extreme price to pay. There is one portion of the line so well known—two-thirds of it so easy—that there is very little more to do than to cut the line. An engineer could give the bearings at once. The lines could be cut, levels taken, and the thing done very cheaply. There is little else to be done. I should say that an average of £30 per mile for that would be ample.

228. Well, now, as regards the grades. According to this plan it is shown that the steepest grades would be 1 in 50. As a professional man, do you look at 1 in 50 as a steep grade for a railway line?—It depends upon the length of it. On our present line 1 in 50 is nothing. In this case the grade would be a falling grade in the direction of coal traffic. If a heavy trade sprung up in coal in the direction of Hokitika the grade would be a falling grade to carry that coal. I cannot conceive that 1 in 50 would be required except for a short distance by Goldsborough. The fall from the farthest point inland to the sea-beach line is 400 feet in eight miles, which is equal to a grade of about 1 in 105. For the sake of economy it might be well to make one short piece of a little heavier fall.

229. Would there be any difficulty as regards sharp curves?—No; none whatever.

230. You do not think there would?—No; it is not country like the Brunnerton and Greymouth line. You would not have to curve round like you do there. That line is full of sharp curves, and it brings the coal traffic. This is a line through flat country, and there are no hills.

231. Are there any private properties that would be interfered with by this proposed route?—No. Starting at Teremakau, is seven miles to Kumara, and it would pass through Crown land and a reserve for the Borough of Kumara. There would be no difficulty there; and from there to Goldsborough, another seven miles, I only know of one section, 12 chains wide, and that is of no value worth speaking of, and you might say there is no compensation to speak of until you go to Stafford Town, and there there would be a slight compensation.

232. The ground has been worked?—Most of the ground has been worked, and abandoned.

233. And taking for granted that it is going to cost, say, £220,000, the original cost along the beach, and £27,000, the estimated cost of the loop?—No; that is not my estimated cost. Supposing work cost as much as estimated originally it would be that, but now I consider that £220,000 would be ample to make the line by the inland route. I am certain that would make it. The original amount of estimate is £9,400 a mile, which we all know, from Government returns of the cost of works now, is far in excess of what that class of work costs at the present time.

235. That is a liberal estimate, you think?—Very liberal; but it was done before the department had the experience it has now.

236. You say that it would not pay working expenses along the beach?—I think it would be perfectly useless.

237. There would not be sufficient returns?—No. In addition to that, there is no land for sale along the beach; and on the other line it would open up land for sale up to the Christchurch Road, and bring it all within easy access of the markets.

238. *Mr. McLean.*] Will you tell us the amount of the traffic on tramway between Greymouth and Kumara?—There are three trams a day, and the tram-car is generally full. I have not any particulars of what is taken, but the tram-car will hold sixteen or eighteen I suppose, and it is generally fairly full. I think it goes with an average of a dozen persons.

239. I suppose it would be easy to get returns of the traffic?—I have no doubt. This is not of course a subject upon which I am well posted up. It was not brought before me.

240. What is your opinion of the traffic between Greymouth and Hokitika? What traffic do you think there would be there? Do you think the railway would pay?—I have taken a great deal of care on the subject, and, if compared with other lines in New Zealand, I am convinced it would be the best paying line you have, after the Greymouth and Brunner line.

241. I mean along the beach between Greymouth and Hokitika?—I think it would be paying public money away without any return. There are two ports—Hokitika and Greymouth—and the line connecting these would be valueless.

242. Is it not a fact that sometimes you can work one port when you cannot work the other?—It