

East Coast route, being the shortest between the extreme points of lines already constructed, might, as a passenger line, be found to possess economical advantages sufficient to justify its being immediately proceeded with. The inquiries which we have been enabled to make have shown that this expectation would not now at least be realized, as the line could not successfully compete for the passenger traffic between the islands with steamers running in the night hours between Lyttelton and Wellington: the time occupied in transit would be longer, the expense greater, and the objectionable sea voyage, in its worst part, could not be escaped.

As a passenger route, the same objections would apply with even greater force to the Central line, on account of its greater length and the high country to be traversed.

In conclusion, while we cannot recommend the present prosecution of "a main trunk line northwards from Canterbury," we feel it our duty to state that no line hitherto proposed or suggested seems to offer, at the present time, fewer disadvantages than the one by the East Coast. With every predisposition to favour a route which should traverse the interior of the country, which should utilize and increase the value of public lands rather than of private lands, which should, if possible, offer facilities for connection with Nelson and the West Coast, we are reluctantly forced to the above conclusion by the evidence before us, which testifies that this route, though somewhat more costly than the Central one in construction, is thirty-eight miles shorter, that its summit level is 2,300 feet lower, that it passes through more agricultural land, and that it promises more satisfactory results.

Opinions, which may have some future importance, as to the best route from Picton to the connecting port in the North Island, have been given by Captain Johnson and Captain Fairchild, and will be found in the report of the evidence given by those officers.

All which we most respectfully submit for your Excellency's consideration.

JAMES FULTON, M.H.R.
DANIEL POLLEN, M.L.C.
J. T. THOMSON.

Dunedin, 7th February, 1883.
