

population of these three places is 1,129. There is now more population on the coast than along the central line.

468. Which of the two lines would best support a population?—The coast line. In a few years there would be a considerable population along that line, while on the central route the population would not be materially increased.

Mr. Henderson read and handed in the following statement of the Blenheim Railway Route Committee:—

To the Honourable the Royal Commissioners appointed for the purpose of making inquiry into the probable cost and economical value of the several lines proposed for the extension of the Main Trunk Line through the Middle Island northwards from Canterbury; and also to inquire further whether any other line would be less costly and more advantageous to the colony than any one of the lines hereinbefore proposed.

We, the Blenheim Committee, beg respectfully to submit as follows:—

That the proposed inland route for the extension of the Main Trunk Line northwards is far inferior to the line from Waipara *via* Cheviot, Parnassus, Kaikoura, and the coast to Blenheim, as regards smallness of cost, economy of working, or general advantage to the colony.

As to probable cost: The coast route, being thirty miles shorter than the inland line between Waipara and Blenheim, must cost proportionately less to construct, say at the average cost of £8,000 per mile, equal to a saving to the colony of £240,000.

As to economical value: The coast route costing £240,000 less than the inland route, represents, at 5 per cent., a saving of £12,000 per annum. But there is the further economy of avoiding the cost of working the additional thirty miles, which, taken at an average ordinary cost of £300 per mile per annum for working, represents a further annual saving of £9,000. But, that being an estimate for comparatively level country, there would be a further loss on each journey of the train having to be raised nearly 3,000 feet higher by the inland than by the coast route, which must cause heavier and more costly machinery to be used and more fuel to be burnt than on the coast route, which rises no higher than 500 feet. Another economic consideration which presents itself to the Committee is that, as the engines would want coaling in the high country on the inland route, these coals would have to be dragged up there at considerable cost, whereas on the coast route coal could be landed from ship at Kaikoura and taken up by train at lowest possible rates. Another element of economy would be the saving of passengers' time and means, as it would take at least one and a half hours more to travel the inland than the coast route—more probably two hours, on account of the higher altitude having to be attained,—and the distance being greater the fare would be more. Another element of economic value is that for the distance of upwards of 100 miles from the Hanmer to Renwicktown, in the Wairau Valley, there is scarcely any land suitable for sustaining an agricultural population, whereas by the coast route 80 miles out of the 150 between Waipara and Blenheim pass through good agricultural country capable of supporting a large population. See Mr. Blair's Report, 21st June, 1879, page 11; see also Mr. Foy's Report of 26th July, 1878, page 10, where he says, referring to the coast route, "None of the other examined routes for the extension of the main trunk line northwards can enter into comparison with this one as regards adaptability for a line of railway when viewed in the light of containing land fit for cultivation, or in any way as possessing the means whereby a population can be supported along it." The Committee attaches great weight to these statements of unbiassed professional men, who pronounce thus after having devoted several years to the investigation of the merits of the two respective routes, and trust that they will have due weight with the Commission as against evidence which has been obtained acknowledgedly for the special purpose of trying to set up an inland route.

The Committee further submits that as regards people living on the actual line of either route the advantage is in favour of the coast route. Between the Hanmer and the Tophouse, a distance of 66 miles, there are but three places where people reside, *viz.*, Carter's, Tarndale, and the Rainbow. There is a far larger population in the township and suburban districts of Kaikoura alone, with its 15,000 acres of arable land, than on 100 miles of the inland line; besides, all the way along the coast route there are people settled at short intervals even between Kaikoura and the Clarence, which is the worst part. Having regard to Mr. Tinline's pamphlet, the Committee submit that the population and resources of the Ashley country will be equally well served by the coast route as by the inland, and that even the Amuri country should equally count to the coast route working down to the junction of Waipara. And while on this point the Committee would say that in adopting such a plan as that of Mr. Tinline's of including remote populations not on the line in question, but who, he assumes, may be affected beneficially by the inland line, this Committee submits that it is entitled to include all the population of the North Island and all the population of the Middle Island from and including Ashley country southward as affected beneficially by the coast line, as the travelling portions of the population of these islands would make use of the coast line, but would scarcely use the inland line even if made.

The Committee also beg to point out that a considerable portion of the country coloured yellow in Mr. Tinline's map embraces portions of the Clarence and Awatere Valleys, which would not be worked up country to the inland line, but down to the coast as heretofore; and, with regard to population actually on the lines of the two proposed routes, that the coast route has the advantage over the inland line even now.

The Committee does not dispute Mr. Tinline's figures, but only accepts the following as being actually on the lines:—

<i>Coast.</i>			<i>Inland.</i>		
Cheviot	...	102	Amuri	...	513
Kaikōura	...	1,105	Awatere	...	56
Awatere	...	323	Wairau	...	735
		<hr/> 1,530			<hr/> 1,304