

GENERAL DISCUSSION

We considered it advisable, when preparing the section of this report which sets out our specific findings and recommendations, not to overload that section by incorporating the detailed reasons for our conclusions. We now proceed to discuss more fully, under appropriate headings, the more important considerations by which we have been guided in framing our report, and to place on record certain data that we think can be more conveniently considered in this part of our report.

(1) NATIONAL VALUE OF DIRECT ACCESS TO THE NORTH SHORE

This would be considerably affected by the provision of a State highway from the city boundary at Avondale to Whenuapai and Dairy Flat. Such a highway alone would meet the need for better communication with areas farther north, and, despite the views expressed by a number of witnesses, we consider that part at least of the motor traffic to and from the north would prefer this route to the bridge route, if only to avoid payment of tolls. There are, however, adequate grounds for our belief that a harbour bridge will be of sufficient national importance to justify substantial financial support from the Government. We mention the following :—

(i) Its value for defence purposes in times of war in providing direct all-weather access to the naval base and other military installations, and in reducing the cost of maintaining them in peace.

(ii) Direct saving of cost of transport of construction materials for Government housing schemes on the North Shore, and bringing within close range of the city large areas suitable for further housing development.

(iii) The North Shore beaches are worthy of being rated as a national asset, and direct access to them will benefit not only tourists and motorists, but the less well-to-do families.

(iv) However efficiently the ferries are conducted, the services are subject to interruption by fogs and storms. Congestion and irksome delay must always occur during peak-loading periods, and especially when holidays create abnormal peaks of traffic ; and it is manifest that to require the provision of services of sufficient capacity to eliminate these delays would be unreasonable and uneconomic. In the aggregate, the economic losses entailed by the use of a system which inevitably involves great waste of time, though difficult to assess precisely in money terms, must be very considerable.

We have been greatly impressed by evidence indicating the many ways in which the present restricted access affects the welfare of the North Shore area. The population at present numbers some 35,000, and the forecast of the population of the North Shore boroughs in 1965, as given in the Metropolitan Planning Report for 1943, is 55,000, to which we have added another 8,000 in the remainder of the North Shore area, making a total of 63,000. This is the largest community in New Zealand not directly served by rail, and the only populous area wholly dependent on a ferry service. Although, in a strictly technical sense, a bridge is not a link in the present declared main highways system, and accordingly the local authorities are not eligible for direct assistance from the Main Highways Board's funds, we consider that a strong case has been presented for the provision of Government finance in the form that we have recommended.

(2) BRIDGE OR TUNNEL

Estimates of the cost of a bridge and approaches conforming to the recommendations of the 1929 Commission, and subsequently amended to comply with the requirements of the Auckland Harbour Board, have now to be increased very substantially, probably by as much as 70 per cent. The estimate of the 1929 Commission was nearly £2,000,000, but this was for a bridge 4,740 ft. long terminating in St Mary's Bay boat harbour and connected to the foreshore by a long embankment. The Auckland