

1902.
NEW ZEALAND.

LEVELS AND WAIMATE COUNTIES

(REPORT OF COMMISSION ON CONVERGING TRAFFIC IN), WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

Return to an Order of the House of Representatives dated the 23rd September, 1902.

Ordered, "That there be laid before this House the evidence and proceedings of the Traffic Commission which recently inquired into and adjudicated on the matter of converging traffic in the case of the Levels and Waimate Counties."—(Hon. Major STEWARD.)

REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable the Earl of Ranfurly, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over His Majesty's Colony of New Zealand, &c.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

In pursuance of Your Excellency's Commissions, dated 24th February, 1902, I commenced an inquiry at Sophia Street Hall, in Timaru, on Thursday, the 1st May, 1902, at 10 o'clock a.m., as to the apportionment of the cost of maintaining the following roads, viz.,—

- (1) Cave-to-Cannington Road,
- (2) Brassell's Road,
- (3) Otipua Road,
- (4) Great South Road,—

also as to the control of apportionment of the cost of maintaining the Upper Pareora Bridge, near Rural Section 16029, and the Lower Pareora Bridge, which is part of the Great South Road above referred to.

The roads are the subject of a Commission issued under section 8 of "The Public Works Acts Amendment Act, 1900." The bridges are the subject of a Commission issued under section 114 of "The Public Works Act, 1894," but, as they are connected with some of the roads, they were by consent of parties all included in one inquiry.

The Levels County Council was represented by Messrs. Raymond and Moore, barristers, &c. ; the Waimate County Council was represented by Messrs. Kinnerney and Hamilton, barristers, &c. ; and the case occupied four days continuously.

The same general objections from an equitable point of view were largely raised in this case as in the case of the Levels County *v.* Geraldine and Mackenzie Counties, a report of which I forward at the same time as this one, and which I shall hereafter refer to as "the former case." It is not therefore necessary for me to again state my conclusions as to these objections, but Mr. Kinnerney raised two further objections, which I will refer to later on.

I will deal with the case first of all generally, afterwards I will deal with each road specially, applying to my conclusions the same equitable considerations as guided me in the former case, and it must be understood that my recommendations are made after carefully considering such questions.

AS TO THE CASE GENERALLY.

The roads and bridges which are the subject of this claim form, with the exception of the Cave-to-Cannington Road, the main arteries of one system of roads through which traffic to and from the part of Levels County south of Timaru, and to and from the Upper and Lower Pareora Ridings in Waimate County, converges on Timaru. The Main South Road is, moreover, part of the main road from Invercargill to Christchurch.

Leaving out the Cave-to-Cannington Road these roads pass through some of the most fertile portions of the Levels County, and they drain the traffic from the lower and a large portion of the Upper Pareora Ridings in Waimate County, which lands are, on the whole, as fertile as those on the opposite side of the Pareora River in Levels County.

One very strong argument in support of the claim of the Levels County in respect to these roads lies in the fact that the whole of the Lower Pareora Riding without exception, and the greater part of the Upper Pareora Riding (as represented by areas), have petitioned to be annexed to Levels County, and a Bill to give effect thereto was presented to Parliament last session, but the Bill did not pass, for reasons which do not concern this report. The avowed object of the movement was for closer touch with Levels County, "because all their interests lay that way,"