

DEPARTMENTAL REPORT ON PETITION.

Public Works Department, Wellington, N.Z., 20th September, 1911.

Re Petition re Proposed Extension of the Putaruru Railway to Taupo.

SIR,—

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letters (two) of 15th instant, forwarding for report petitions by the Taupo-Totara Timber Company (Limited) and Mr. A. S. Graham and other settlers, urging that Orders in Council should be issued authorizing the company to (1) purchase and dispose of certain Native land in the districts affected by the proposed extension of the Putaruru-Mokai Railway to Taupo, and (2) to extend such railway to Taupo.

In reply, I have to state that the Order in Council mentioned in the first paragraph of the company's petition as having already been issued requires them to run one train each way three times in each week between Putaruru and Mokai, and to carry timber and farm-produce from any lands which were, at the date of the Order (29th day of January, 1908) or on the 1st day of July, 1901, Crown lands, at the rates specified in the schedule to that Order. The company also has the option of using the tramway for the carriage of other goods, and they may also carry passengers, provided that the line and rolling-stock are first inspected and certified as safe and fit for such traffic by an Engineer to be appointed for that purpose by the Minister in terms of section 213 of the Public Works Act, 1908, and provided also that the Minister grants them a permit authorizing the line to be opened and used for public traffic, under section 214 of the same Act. Up to the present time, however, the line has not been passed for the conveyance of passengers.

The proposed extension is situated in the County of East Taupo, and as the Counties Act, 1908, is not in force in that county, it is open to the company to apply for and obtain an Order authorizing the construction of the extension under section 5 of the Tramways Act, 1908.

The proposal *re* purchase of Native lands is presumably not a matter on which the advice of this Department is desired. If not, there only remains the question of authorizing the extension of the tramway, and that is a matter in which the intervention of Parliament seems to be scarcely necessary. As already intimated, sufficient authority exists under the Tramways Act, 1908, or the District Railways Act, 1908, to authorize the construction of the extension.

The petitions (two) are returned herewith.

I have, &c.,

H. J. H. BLOW, Under-Secretary.

The Chairman, Taupo Totara Petition Committee, House of Representatives, Wellington.

REPORT.

I AM directed to report,—

That the Taupo Totara Timber Company Committee, to whom was referred the petitions of the Taupo Totara Timber Company (Limited), No. 185, and A. S. Graham and thirty-five others, No. 211, has carefully considered the same, and has arrived at the conclusion that, in view of the important issues involved in the petition of the Taupo Totara Timber Company, and more especially having regard to the vagueness of the proposals contained in the said petition in so far as they affect the future disposal and settlement of the 200,000 acres of land which the said company desires to acquire from the Natives, the Committee is of opinion that the whole question should be held over for the consideration of Parliament next session.

The Committee is further of opinion that in the meantime full inquiry should be made by the Government as to the best means of connecting Lake Taupo by rail with the existing railway system, so as to facilitate the early settlement of the large areas of Crown and Native lands in the Taupo district.

24th October, 1911.

T. H. DAVEY, Chairman.

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS.

FRIDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER, 1911.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10.30 a.m.

Present: Mr. Davey, Mr. Forbes, Mr. Fraser, Mr. Greenslade, Mr. Guthrie, Mr. MacDonald, Mr. Mander, Mr. Myers, Mr. Newman, and Mr. Reed.

The order of reference setting up the Committee was read by the Clerk.

On the motion of Mr. Greenslade, seconded by Mr. Mander, Mr. Davey was unanimously elected Chairman.

Mr. Davey then took the chair, and returned thanks for his election.

Resolved, That the Chairman consult with Mr. Dalziell, and, if convenient, call a meeting for Thursday, 21st September.

The Committee then adjourned.