

1856-7.

VICTORIA.

PETITION.

CASTLEMAINE RAILWAY.

Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 13th February, 1857.

TO THE HONORABLE THE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:—

The Inhabitants of Castlemaine, in public meeting assembled, respectfully represent to your Honorable House:—

That in common with the people of other parts of this Colony, they feel deep interest in the subject of railway communication, and regard the speedy construction of railways as essential to the progress of the Colony, in a degree proportionate to its natural resources.

That a line running northwards from Melbourne to Sandhurst should, in their opinion, have preference over a line in any other direction from the metropolis, for the following reasons:—

- 1st. Because such a line would traverse a portion of the Colony richer in mineral wealth and in agricultural capacity than any other district of similar extent in the Colony.
- 2nd. Because it would follow the chief seats of population, and connect the principal towns of the interior.
- 3rd. Because the main traffic in the Colony is carried on on the road running northerly from Melbourne to Sandhurst; and a railway, in order to be of use to a community, should be made easily accessible for goods and other traffic.
- 4th. That the townships lying to the north of Melbourne on the Mount Alexander-road having all been laid out and proclaimed by the Government, many persons have invested capital in them in houses, land, and trade, relying on the necessarily implied obligation on the part of Government to include such townships in any general scheme of railway or other improved modes of communication.
- 5th. Because on the Mount Alexander-road such townships are more numerous, and investments in freeholds and commercial speculations much greater in aggregate amount than in any other direction from the metropolis.

For these reasons, to which many others might be added, your Memorialists respectfully urge upon your Honorable House to give preference to the northerly line of railway, feeling assured that its early construction would be of greater advantage to the whole Colony than any other line.

That besides the general interest your Memorialists have in the promotion of Railways, they have a special and particular interest, as the inhabitants of one of the chief towns on the gold-fields, in securing the advantages that would arise from the passage of the main trunk line and the erection of a station within its boundaries.

That your Memorialists perceive that notwithstanding the importance of the town of Castlemaine as the seat of a large population—as the chief town of the county of Talbot, which has assumed the responsibility of self-government—in which property has been lately assessed for municipal purposes at the annual value of £60,000; where are situate the head-quarters of the military and civil officers for the district; where Government has erected and is erecting public buildings of a durable character; where the chief roads of an extensive district converge; where the sittings of civil and criminal courts are held; and where private enterprise is being rapidly developed. Notwithstanding all these facts, it is recommended in the Report on Railways, submitted to your Honorable House by the Honorable the Surveyor-General, that the main trunk line shall run from Elphinstone to Harcourt, leaving Castlemaine to be connected with the latter place by a five mile branch.

That the district between Elphinstone and Harcourt is not populated, and the land lies altogether in the hands of a few non-resident holders, while the route from Elphinstone to Castlemaine, only two (2) miles further, is cultivated or occupied throughout the greater part of its extent by numerous settled freeholders, who carry on a variety of commercial pursuits.

That your Memorialists, from information they have received and from their own observation, believe that the engineering difficulties in the route they advocate are not so much (if at all) greater than in the line between Elphinstone and Harcourt, as to justify a measure that would result in immense direct injury to 15,000 people, without conferring the slightest advantage upon the general public, and would be injurious to the districts lying to the westward of Castlemaine, including Carisbrook, Maryborough, Dunolly, &c., the traffic to all these places passing through Castlemaine.

Your Memorialists are aware that the Honorable the Surveyor-General has declared that he is in favor of a direct line to Castlemaine from Melbourne; but they are also aware that the ultimate decision of that question lies with your Honorable House; therefore they earnestly ask your Honorable House to take their claims into your consideration in deciding on the route of the main trunk line from Melbourne to Sandhurst, and direct that it shall be brought into the town of Castlemaine, and that a station shall be there erected.

And your Petitioners will ever pray, &c.

Signed on behalf of the meeting,

THOMAS ANDREWS,

Chairman.

Castlemaine,
26th January, 1857.

By Authority: JOHN FERREE, Government Printer, Melbourne.