

1891.
—
VICTORIA.

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS.

REPORT

FROM

SECTIONAL COMMITTEE (No. 1)

ON THE

NEERIM EXTENSIONS;

TOGETHER WITH THE

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE AND APPENDICES.

By Authority :

ROBT. S. BRAIN, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.

No. 4.—SECTIONAL COMMITTEE REPORT.

MEMBERS OF SECTIONAL COMMITTEE (No. 1).

The Honorable THOMAS BENT, M.L.A., Chairman.

The Honorable James Buchanan, M.L.C.,
Arthur Champion Groom, Esquire, M.L.A.,
John McIntyre, Esquire, M.L.A.,

The Honorable Donald Melville, M.L.C.,
The Honorable Albert Lee Tucker, M.L.A.,
The Honorable John Woods, M.L.A.

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS.

SECTIONAL COMMITTEE (No. 1).

NEERIM SOUTH TO NEERIM, AND NEERIM TO
NEERIM NORTH.

REPORT.

THE SECTIONAL COMMITTEE (No. 1) to which the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways referred the proposed Neerim Extensions have the honour to report as follows:—

1. The Committee left Melbourne on Monday evening, the 13th April, for Warragul, and the following day proceeded by train to Jindivick, a station on the branch line now in course of construction from the main Gippsland Railway to Neerim South. They then drove to Neerim South, and thence over the route of the proposed extensions to Neerim and Neerim North. Evidence was taken at both these places, several witnesses being examined, including farmers residing in different parts of the district, a councillor of the Buln Buln Shire, the shire valuer, a contractor for road works, and an engineer who had been engaged by the local railway league to inspect the extension and furnish a report thereon. The Committee then returned to Warragul, where further evidence was taken the same evening.

2. Two proposals for extending the line to Neerim South, which is now nearing completion, have been referred to the Committee. The first, which was one of the lines included in the Railway Construction Bill 1890, is from Neerim South to Neerim. This line would be 5·51 miles in length, with a ruling gradient of 1 in 40, and 15-chain curves. It is estimated by the Railway Department to cost £53,192, or £9,654 per mile. The second is for a line from Neerim South to Neerim North, 7·71 miles, with a ruling gradient of 1 in 40, 15-chain curves, and is estimated to cost £76,932, or £9,978 per mile. When taking evidence on these lines the

desirableness of carrying the proposed extension on to the Latrobe River was brought under the notice of the Committee. Various deviations were also urged on their attention by persons residing to the east of the surveyed route.

Character of
country—
settlement.

3. The line in course of construction to Neerim South just enters the good land in this district, and the proposed extension would serve a considerable area of country in which the soil is of excellent quality, and admirably adapted for the growth of potatoes and root crops, and for dairying purposes. The officer who surveyed the extension to Neerim North states in his report to the Railway Department, dated October, 1888, that "The land through which this line passes is of excellent quality, well adapted for agriculture when cleared, and has been selected for several years. A considerable amount of work in improving and clearing the land has been done. Some portions of the land are held in large blocks, but if the demand for land arose through the making of a railway, these would no doubt be subdivided and sold, thus making room for an increase in the population. To the west of the line, as far as the valley of the Tarago River, the soil is very good, but beyond the river it becomes poor and the country very broken. To the east the land is of fair quality, with patches of inferior soil in parts, for several miles. To the north and east of the proposed termination of the line the soil is good to the Latrobe River. In the district of Noojee there is excellent soil in the valley of the Loch River and skirting the Latrobe River, but away from the rivers the country is very broken and the soil patchy, the land being only suitable for grazing. Large quantities of first-rate timber are available along the route of the proposed railway. The timber is principally blackbutt, with some bluegum, messmate, and blackwood."

The observations of the Committee when inspecting the line, and the evidence they received, bears out the correctness of the surveyor's remarks, although the district has developed considerably since the report was made.

Statistics.
Vide
Appendix A.

4. Statistics based on the census returns of 1891, have been furnished by the Government Statist respecting this line. These statistics are given for an area of about 135,000 acres, shown on the map submitted herewith. It will be observed that the population is stated to be 356, although in the statistics furnished by the Railways Commissioners in their report on the lines contained in the last Railway Construction Bill the population was put down at 2,460. The large difference is accounted for by the fact that, in the Commissioners' report, the returns were given for "one-third of the Buln Buln Shire," while those furnished to the Committee are for the area which, in their opinion, will be actually served by the proposed line.

Probable
traffic.

5. The proposed line will open up several thousands of acres of heavily timbered country. The timber, much of which is of first-class quality for saw-milling purposes, consists principally of mountain ash, bluegum, stringybark, messmate, iron-bark, blackwood, and beech, and would furnish a large traffic. At the request of the local railway league, the Hon. C. Sargeant, M.L.C., saw-miller, Warragul, visited Neerim North and reported, as an expert, on the timber in that locality. In this report he states—"I estimate that the area traversed would supply at least five saw-mills for from fifteen to twenty years with continuous work. Allowing that each mill turned out 5,000 feet per day, which is a moderate average, the output from the five mills would represent 25,000 feet super., or about 70 tons per day. Assuming that the line of railway will be about twenty miles from Warragul, the amount earned would be about £1,725, counting 50 weeks in the year. Of course, the

Vide
Appendix D.

“existence of saw-mills means a large amount of incoming freight and the employment at least of 100 men. There would also be a very large trade in palings and “other split timber.” In addition to timber, a considerable quantity of milk, dairy produce, and root crops, would be sent from the district as soon as the line was made. The soil being of excellent quality for the growth of potatoes and root crops, these products would be the principal source of traffic when the land is cleared.

6. A considerable area of Crown land will be greatly enhanced in value by the construction of this extension. The Committee have ascertained from a return prepared by the Lands Department that, within the area shown on the map herewith, there are 30,000 acres of unoccupied land, including areas temporarily withheld for timber purposes—9,000 acres of timber reserves—and that, out of the areas leased under section 32 of the *Land Act* 1884, 30,000 acres will probably revert to the Crown when the leases expire. The increased value of this land would more than cover the cost of the railway.

Increase in value of Crown lands.
Vide Appendix B.

7. The departmental estimate for “land and compensation” on the line from Neerim South to Neerim is £2,975. The Committee think that the land required for railway purposes should be given to the Department free of cost, and without compensation for damage by severance. Evidence was given that much of the land is worth from £9 to £14 per acre, and that the proposed railway, if constructed, would double and even treble that value.

Land required for the line.

8. When taking evidence at Neerim the Committee were asked to make inquiries as to the desirableness of a deviation in the route of the proposed line as surveyed, between Neerim South and Neerim. It was urged that, without altering the proposed terminus at Neerim, the line could be taken about a mile and a half to the east of the surveyed route, in order to serve the selectors in the parish of Neerim East. It was stated that a large amount of settlement had taken place in this portion of the district since the extension was surveyed, and that the proposed route would not serve the eastern portion of the district at all, owing to the hilly nature of the country. The Committee, however, after due inquiry, cannot recommend the deviation asked for. Two communications which were received on this subject are attached hereto (*vide* Appendix C).

Deviation to east.
Vide Minutes of Evidence, pp. 16 and 17, qs. 571-601.

9. The evidence respecting the line from Neerim to Neerim North is very conflicting. Several witnesses stated that the proposed extension beyond Neerim would benefit very few persons, and was not justified. It was urged that the line should be taken in an easterly direction if extended beyond Neerim. The Committee would recommend that before any decision is arrived at respecting the line from Neerim to Neerim North, a thorough inspection of the country to the north and east of Neerim should be made in order to ascertain the direction in which any future extension should be taken.

The proposed extension beyond Neerim.

10. The Committee are of opinion that the estimated cost of the line from Neerim South to Neerim, supplied by the Railway Department, £9,654 per mile, is excessive, and that a railway suitable for the district should be constructed at an expenditure not exceeding £6,000 per mile. At this cost the extension would be justified, and would be a valuable addition to the line already authorized to Neerim South, which is only $13\frac{1}{4}$ miles in length, and which, as already stated, just enters the good land in the district. The rolling-stock required for the line to Neerim South could be used on the extension to Neerim.

Estimated cost of line to Neerim.

Recom-
mendation

11. The evidence received is submitted herewith, and the Sectional Committee recommend that the line from Neerim South to Neerim be authorized, at a cost not exceeding £6,000 per mile, and that only such accommodation be provided as is required for the traffic which may be expected, and which is described in paragraph 5. They would also suggest that increased rates should be charged on this extension, and that the price of all Crown land hereafter selected or sold in the district served by the proposed line should be increased, owing to its enhancement in value by the railway.

THOS. BENT,
Chairman of Sectional Committee No. 1.

Parliament House, Melbourne,
4th November, 1891.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE AND APPENDICES.

LIST OF WITNESSES.

	PAGE
J. J. Barr, Councillor, Buln Buln Shire	1
W. Dowie, farmer, secretary local railway league	3
F. H. Cooke, valuer to the Buln Buln Shire, &c.	4, 17, 24
Thomas Short, C.E.	7, 19
A. Edney, shire contractor	8
Adam English, storekeeper, Neerim South	9
Francis Barr, Neerim South	11
A. D. Preston, builder and contractor	13
C. Litaize, farmer	14
H. Beamish, farmer	14
T. Hogan, sen., farmer, Neerim South	14
A. Stewart, farmer	16
R. Rendell, farmer, Neerim East	16
C. H. Stephens, farmer, Neerim East	17

APPENDICES.

- A.—Statistics furnished by the Government Statist.
- B.—Return from Crown Lands Department showing how land served by the Neerim Extension is held.
- C.—Letters from R. Rendell, urging deviation to east of surveyed route.
- D.—Report from Hon. C. Sergeant, M.L.C., on timber resources of the district.

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS.

NEERIM EXTENSION.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

(TAKEN BEFORE SECTIONAL COMMITTEE No. 1.)

(At Neerim North.)

TUESDAY, 14TH APRIL, 1891.

Members present :

The Hon. T. BENT, in the Chair;	
The Hon. D. Melville,	Mr. Groom,
The Hon. J. Buchanan.	Mr. McIntyre,
	The Hon. A. L. Tucker,
	The Hon. J. Woods.

John James Barr, sworn and examined.

1. *By the Chairman.*—What are you?—Councillor of the shire of Buln Buln.
2. What have you to communicate to the Committee about this proposed line?—I advocate the construction, because there are about 15,000 to 20,000 acres of good land, second to none in the colony for potatoes and oats, and other crops. The land yields heavier than any other land I have seen. I have seen as much as 15 to 17 tons of potatoes taken from Neerim land. There is also a large forest to be served by that line; I do not think any forest left in the colony is equal to it. It will also be a great help to the district in the shape of taking the heavy traffic off the shire roads. I have been a councillor for seven or eight years, and we have great work to make the roads to contend against the timber traffic. If we had this line, 7 miles 71 chains, it would take all the heavy traffic off the roads, and put the council in a position to make roads for carrying larger weights. As it is we cannot make them. If this line were made the people of Noojee, Neerim North, and the people north of Ellinging would have the terminus in a place where there would be all good graded roads, from the valley of the Latrobe, grades of 1 in 30, which cannot be done if the terminus is lower down. I mean, that at the 7 miles 71 chains you could get good graded roads in every direction.
3. One in 30?—Yes.
4. Have you anything else to say?—I do not know that I have. I do not wish to detain you, as there will be other witnesses who will be able to deal with the timber question and such like.
5. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—Does this line pass through your property?—It passes through my property. Further down it takes a curve in my property to get round a sharp spur.
6. What do you value your land at?—According to the value of the land about here that has been sold, the highest price, selling a farm, is £14 an acre. I value my land at the same.
7. What would be the cost to the State of passing through your property, including severance?—If the rest of my neighbours will do the same, I am willing to let them go through free.
8. Seeing that this line will cost about £10,000 a mile, do you contemplate the imposition of a railway tax for a time to meet the difficulty of paying that money?—There has been a proposal that I have read of in the papers, known as the betterment system. I think that is the system that should be carried out. I am in favour of it. A man selects land at £1 an acre and makes certain improvements on it, but the railway puts an enormous value on it, and I do not see why he should reap that benefit for nothing.
9. Have you any idea of the increase in value by the making of this seven miles of railway?—Double or treble.
10. You think that land that is worth £14 now would be doubled in value?—Yes.
11. Has that been the case as far as the present extension is concerned?—I cannot say, because the three miles is not got into yet.
12. By the line, from the main line to Jindivick, has the land been improved in value?—I cannot say; I am not well acquainted with it. It is not in my shire. I know, of course, that it has been increased considerably.
13. Do you know what the value of the land was before the railway was made?—You would buy it from £6 to £10 an acre.
14. Would you give from £10 to £20 for it now?—I would not like to say you could get it for that. I am not sufficiently acquainted with it.
15. I put the question to you in the interest of the people of the colony?—You see, in some cases, it would be doubled in value, according to position.
16. Say, land three miles from a station?—I do not know.
17. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—Are you a shire councillor?—Yes.
18. What does it cost your shire for metal for your roads?—It costs our shire from £1,000 to £1,200 a mile.
19. What does it cost per cubic yard?—From 7s. to 10s., according to the distance of the cartage.
20. Is there any gravel along the line of route?—No.
21. Then the ballast would be an expensive item?—There are bluestone quarries. It all comes from Berwick at present. If there were crushers at the quarries the ballasting could be done cheaper.

22. What kind of timber is there along the line?—All kinds; messmate, stringybark, and bluegum.
23. Do you think the bluegum would do for sleepers?—Yes.
24. Have they ever taken sleepers from the forest, bluegum for instance?—I could not say for sleepers. On the three miles they have used the bluegum for posts, and some for culverts.
25. You do not know about sleepers?—No.
26. You do not know anything about the cost of sleepers?—It is out of my line.
27. Do you know anything about the cost of fencing?—It is £80 a mile in this district, that is a good three-railed fence.
28. A running mile?—Yes.
29. Could you put the same kind of fencing on this proposed line as there is on the extension to Neerim South for the amount you state?—Yes.
30. That is £160 a mile for both sides of the line?—Yes.
31. And the same class of fencing?—Yes.
32. Whereabouts is your place situated?—About three miles from here, further down.
33. How far are you from the terminus when the line is constructed?—About four miles, or four and a half.
34. Are you very anxious for the extension?—For the district I am, and looking at it from a national point of view, that railways should not be made unless they pay.
35. You do not think the line would pay unless it were extended?—No.
36. You think it would pay if this extension were made?—Yes.
37. What would there be to make it pay?—Timber would do it.
38. Timber only?—There would be a great amount of farm produce, not to start with, but it would be growing every year, and in the meantime the timber would be paying. A good deal of the best timber near the margin of the forest has been spoilt. It was green and split. Some seven or eight years ago there were 30 or 40 teams of bullocks engaged in the timber trade, but they have got to the limit of where it would pay to cut and cart it.
39. But if the railway comes along it would pay to cut it?—Yes, from the fringe of the forest.
40. What kind of timber are you speaking of?—Paling kinds, blackbutt and stringybark.
41. Are there any saw-mills?—Not yet; it would not pay to cart the timber down.
42. It is all split then?—In the past, up to the present; but if the line were constructed there would be any number of saw-mills.
43. Can you tell the Committee the population between the present terminus and the proposed extension?—I could not.
44. Shall we have that information given to us?—I think so; some of the other witnesses could give it.
45. *By Mr. Groom.*—We have heard that there is little cultivation at present; is that in consequence of the badness of the roads?—It will not pay to grow potatoes, as it costs more to cart them down to the station than they would be worth.
46. If the railway comes here, would you then have a great deal of cultivation?—Yes.
47. As the timber was cleared off the land, the land would go under the plough?—Inevitably. You must put it under the plough.
48. And what crops would you grow?—Potatoes; all kinds of root crops. Maize does well; there would be a large quantity of maize grown.
49. And you think there would soon be a very heavy traffic for the railway?—Yes.
50. *By the Chairman.*—You think, from a national point of view, that the line should go to the terminal point of the survey; where is that?—At the end of the survey, the 7 miles 71 chains.
51. And no further?—I do not say that.
52. When you speak from a national point of view, how far would you go. Tell me where the 7 miles 71 chains is?—About three-quarters of a mile from here, to the west.
53. You think if you had it at the 7 miles 71 chains it would be sufficient for all practical purposes?—No; from a national point of view I would say go to the Latrobe River. If I were making it out of my own pocket I would carry it to the Latrobe, and then you could get the timber down the Loch too.
54. How far would it be to the Latrobe?—In a direct line a mile and a quarter.
55. I suppose you have considered the character of the country, and what it would cost to go there with a line. How far do you think it would be to go with a railway, and what do you think would be the probable cost?—I believe the line can be got down to the river in a mile and a half, but they could take the railway down, I believe, at a cheaper cost than the estimated cost.
56. You think if that additional mile and a half were made, it would increase the revenue to the railways more than it would if the line stopped at the point under consideration?—Yes.
57. Is there much land taken up about Noojee?—Yes, the land is selected. The biggest part of the land is taken up, and the people are living in hopes of getting some means of communication with a market.
58. Can you give us some idea of the population?—Some of our witnesses will be able to do so.
59. I am asking you—if you do not know, say so?—I do not know.
60. You have no doubt that if you were placing that money, as your own investment, you would recommend that the line should go further than at present proposed?—Yes.
61. Do you know the country farther on beyond that, where you would make the railway?—I do. I think the railway could be carried with advantage up the Latrobe Valley, and it might be joined with the line up Lilydale way.
62. Do you know how far it is to Lilydale?—No.
63. Do you know the land that is taken up?—Up to the Dividing Range.
64. Do you speak the unanimous opinion of the people of the district, or is there a difference of opinion about going on with the line to where you say?—I do not say there is a unanimous opinion.
65. In what capacity do you appear here?—I appear in the capacity of a councillor.
66. Is there a difference of opinion?—Yes.
67. What distance would you take each side of the line as ground to provide feeders to the line under consideration?—On the one side it is not very wide; on the west side it is about a mile of agricultural land; then there is timber.

68. What is the timber like?—It is good paling timber, and good splitting timber.
69. How far on each side of the line is the timber good. I suppose you consider that the timber is as good a crop as you will ever have?—Yes.
70. How far do you say would act as a feeder on the west side?—Four or five miles.
71. How many miles on the other side?—On the other side the agricultural land extends, I suppose, from four to five miles.
72. Over the whole of that area, what would you say would be the increase in the value. Not taking particular land, but the average land. As a shire councillor, and having some knowledge of the district, what would you say would be a uniform increase over the whole area?—I believe it would be worth double the money if we had a railway.
73. What do you value the whole of the land at at present over the whole area?—I value my own, on the main road, at £14 to £16; as you go back from the main road it is not worth so much.
74. I am taking the whole area. What would be the fair average value?—I suppose about £8 to £9 an acre. That is the average.
75. The average value to-day, without a railway?—Yes.
76. Do you think it would be that?—I do. That is agricultural land.
77. I understand your evidence to be that, on the west side, it would embrace a feeding ground of five miles, including timber, and on the other side about the same area. I am speaking now of what will be the average value of the whole area, including good, bad, and indifferent land?—I would not like to answer that. You see I am not a saw-miller. I do not understand much about milling. I might estimate an acre of timber at three times what it is worth, or I might value it too low.
78. Is it not all Government land where the forest is?—Yes; the most of it.
79. Have you formed in your own mind, even since we have been speaking about it, an opinion of the value of the land. You may make three classes of it if you like. Take the agricultural land first?—The agricultural land is worth from £8 to £9 an acre.
80. Could you tell me what would be the area of agricultural land in the five miles on each side of the line?—I would not like to give it. Some of the other witnesses will give it.
81. *By the Hon. J. Buchanan.*—Do you think there is one mile to the west?—Yes.
82. *By the Chairman.*—Perhaps when you said the value would be doubled you did not mean what you said. You did not mean the whole of the land would be doubled?—No.
83. Would you like to withdraw what you have said about the value of the whole of the land being doubled. Because it will read in the report of the evidence for Parliament that you say the railway would make all the land of double the value?—I mean for the agricultural land, not for the timber land. I would not like to say that.

The witness withdrew.

William Dowie, sworn and examined.

84. *By the Chairman.*—What are you?—Farmer, and secretary of the local railway league. I have a statement I would like to read.
85. What is it about?—General evidence.
86. Have you prepared it yourself?—Yes.
87. You say you are secretary of the railway league?—Yes.
88. How did you prepare it. Could you cull from that, and give it in the shape of evidence shortly?—Yes.
89. You prepared the materials in that statement?—Yes. We have been dealing with the two miles and a quarter extension—that means the 5 miles 51 chains. We are dealing more particularly with that.
90. You thought you had got the other?—No. We were told we had to provide evidence to you of what we wanted to show.
91. *By Mr. Woods.*—You mean two miles and a quarter from here?—From English's.
92. *By the Chairman.*—What is known as the 7 miles 71 chains?—Yes. The terminal point is table land, with plenty of water, easy of access, and with ballast. The cost of this line may be cheapened in the same ratio, but even at the departmental estimate we can make it pay. There is timber of different varieties, and of the best quality, consisting of bluegum, stringybark, messmate, and ironbark. Those woods are suitable for sleepers; the blackbutt, for railway-carriage work; myrtle, for furniture making; and timber generally, for milling. It is timber of splendid quality. One portion of the forest, six miles square, is estimated to give close on £500 a year for the carriage of palings. Palings have been sent from here 300 miles, therefore making other portions of the railways of the colony pay.
93. *By Mr. Woods.*—How much for the cost of carriage of palings do you say?—£500 a year.
94. For carrying them two miles and a quarter?—Yes.
95. What is the rate?—About a penny a ton per mile.
96. That is 2½d. a ton for the trip?—Yes.
97. That produces, you say, £500 a year?—Close on it.
98. Have you got the calculation on which you base that?—Yes. We estimate that those six miles square would return six trucks to the acre, and that would last for close on to 32 years for 200 men, and that allows a broad margin.
99. *By the Chairman.*—Have you got, in tons, the quantity you produce?—I do not think I have. I had it in 7-ton trucks.
100. *By Mr. Tucker.*—You would require 1,000 tons of palings a week?—We could send in more than that.
101. *By the Chairman.*—Go on with your statement if you please?—We have had an expert to go over the timber of the Nayook Timber Reserve, Mr. Sargeant, of Warragul; shall I hand in his statement—[handing in a document].
102. *By the Hon. J. Buchanan.*—You represent a league?—Yes, and we instructed Mr. Sargeant to prepare that estimate.
103. *By the Chairman.*—Do you swear that is Mr. Sargeant's statement?—I can swear to the signature.

104. Mr. Sargeant says, "I estimate that the area traversed would supply at least five saw-mills for from fifteen to twenty years with continuous work, allowing that each mill turned out 5,000 feet per day, which is a moderate average. The output from the five mills would represent 25,000 feet super., or about 70 tons per day. Assuming that the line of railway will be about twenty miles from Warragul, the amount carried would be about £1,725, counting 50 weeks in the year. Of course the existence of saw-mills means a large amount of incoming freight, and the employment at least of 100 men. There would also be a very large trade in palings and other split timber." Although you speak of two miles and a half, you mean 7 miles 71 chains?—Yes.

105. What else have you to tell the Committee?—There is the item of firewood, which would cause traffic.

106. What is your firewood?—The firewood here is mostly blackbutt.

107. Where is it to be taken to?—We could send it to town, and it would clear the cost of cutting and freight, and if it did that we should be getting the land cleared for nothing, and then the produce would come in.

108. How many miles have you taken?—No miles.

109. What had you in your mind when you were saying that it would clear the freight and the cutting. Is it 60 miles from Melbourne to Warragul?—Eighty-three miles.

110. That is 83d. to begin with?—Yes.

111. Will it run that?—Yes, and leave a little margin; and supposing it only paid the expenses of freight and cutting, we are clearing the land for nothing.

112. That is grubbing the trees?—Yes.

113. *By Mr. Woods.*—Give us the cost of clearing the land—grubbing the trees, and cutting into firewood?—[*No answer.*]

114. *By the Chairman.*—What would it cost at the station, delivered on the station?—Close by?

115. Do you agree with Mr. Barr?—No.

116. How far would you go for the firewood?—Within three miles of the station.

117. And burn the remainder away?—Yes, the stumps.

118. The trees?—I could not say it would pay further away, but there is a great amount of timber on the blocks close to the station.

119. How many years would that last?—My figures bring out 320 acres, and I think that would last five years, and return £42 a year.

120. You cannot tell how many such blocks there would be in three miles and a half?—No. There are a great number of acres of arable land that would grow all kinds of produce such as the samples round you—[*pointing to some samples of produce of various kinds*].—Potatoes and oats will grow; potatoes from 8 to 18 tons to the acre. An average of 8 tons of potatoes has been the harvest here.

121. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—You say 8 tons is the average?—Eight tons I consider the average.

122. Then you must grow under 8 tons in some places?—Take one season with another. Some seasons they are lower than others. Oats yield from 60 to 80 bushels in the district.

123. *By Mr. Woods.*—What about maize?—There is not much grown here. Potatoes from here were given the first prize at the Neerim North show. Then we have tin, and gold, and silver, and a special sample of shale here close handy to the terminus.

124. *By the Chairman.*—When you say "shale," do you mean kerosene, or lignite?—Here is a sample—[*producing the same*].

125. Have you anything else to add?—There is not much more evidence that I have written down to give.

126. Do you agree with Mr. Barr that the line should be extended a mile and a half?—Yes.

The witness withdrew.

Frederick Henry Cooke, sworn and examined.

127. *By the Chairman.*—What are you?—Appraiser to the Crown, for the parish of Neerim, sworn valuer, and valuer to the shire of Buln Buln.

128. What do you wish to tell us?—I have prepared a statement from the shire books. This is only from as far as our own shire is concerned.

129. Where is that along the line. Give us the two points. Commencing at Jindivick, the line terminates where?—Almost in the centre of this portion.

130. Are you speaking of the line in course of construction?—From Jindivick to a place north is in the shire, and the balance as surveyed, that is 7 miles 71 chains. In the parishes of Nayook, Ellinging, Noojee, and Noojee East, over 50,000 acres have been selected. That comprises land of various descriptions, containing large forests of valuable timber. I say I consider the freight alone of that would pay for the construction of the line in a few years' time. There is one great good in carrying the line as far as the survey is carried, for unless that is done a great portion of the holdings will fall back to the Crown, and on those selections where the people are able to hold the land the timber will be destroyed, which will be a very heavy loss to the Crown.

131. *By Mr. Tucker.*—What kind of holdings are they?—The holdings in Nayook East are taken up under the 32nd section.

132. Are you aware that under that section they are not allowed to destroy the timber?—They can do nothing else.

133. Do you know it is part of the duty of the rangers to prevent that destruction of timber?—They get permission to ring the timber. The exact area selected in this portion is 50,495 acres.

134. Which portion?—Most of the 320-acre blocks in Noojee, Noojee East, and Ellinging.

135. *By Mr. Woods.*—That on the other side of the river?—Not all the brown area. Some was taken up before. The area occupied in the parish of Neerim, north of the present terminus (the contract is just let) is 16,668 acres, the majority of which consists of a rich, deep, friable chocolate soil, of volcanic formation. As a proof that this is a valuable potato country, the Government Statist's returns show a return of 19 cwt. over any other shire in the colony.

136. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—What is the average?—6 tons 5cwt. 17lbs.

137. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—Over the whole shire?—Yes; the highest has been got in Neerim.
138. *By Mr. Woods.*—When were those compiled?—A few days ago.
139. From what?—Hayter's report in the *Argus*. That is for the present current year. We have been all over the shire this year.
140. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—This valuation is given by Hayter to the shire?—Yes.
141. *By Mr. Tucker.*—That is the shire of Buln Buln?—Yes.
142. Can you give us an idea of the number of acres in close proximity to the line?—I have not got it. I can give you the number of acres available for cultivation; it is 11,000.
143. There are only 400 acres under crop?—That is all; but 11,000 could be made available.
144. Have you anything to tell us about the oats?—Nothing about the oat crop. The shire of Buln Buln stands third on the list for hay. Oats are very little grown in Neerim at present.
145. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—You heard the first witness speak of the value of land, what do you think about the 11,000 acres, as to the average value?—The present value?
146. Yes?—The present value is about £6 per acre—from £5 to £6.
147. That is your best land?—Yes.
148. Do you know the quantity of second best land—how much is there of that?—That would be affected by the railway?
149. Yes?—Plenty, coloured brown.
150. Give the average value of the second quality?—There are from 10,000 to 15,000 acres, and the present value is almost *nil* to the shire.
151. Take the average market value?—There is no market value, because it is under the 32nd section, and could not be sold.
152. We want to know the value at present?—From 30s. to £2 per acre.
153. We have all then that would be affected by the railway in your shire?—No. I have not named the balance of 16,000 in the shire of Neerim.
154. Worth what?—From £3 to £4 per acre.
155. At an average?—Yes.
156. With your knowledge of the fine quality of the soil, what should you say would be the increased value if the railway is granted as asked?—If the railway was there it would be worth from £15 to £25 an acre.
157. That would be an increase?—Yes.
158. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—That would be the 11,000 acres?—I will say the half of the 11,000.
159. *By the Chairman.*—You take the 11,000 acres at £6?—Yes at £6.
160. We want the average value?—That portion of the land that could be used for potato-growing would be of vastly greater value than that used for other purposes.
161. You first start at £6 for 11,000 acres, and now Mr. Melville asks the increase of value on the whole?—The increase on the whole would be £10 to £14.
162. That is not the increase of total value?—Yes, it would be more than double.
163. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—On the whole you agree with the first witness?—Undoubtedly.
164. What would be the addition on the 15,000 acres?—I think it would increase it from £2 to £4 per acre.
165. That would be double?—Yes, practically.
166. Now take the 16,000 acres at £4, what increase would there be on that?—The balance would not be increased so much. It is only suitable for grass purposes. We may put 10s. on it.
167. *By the Chairman.*—Were you an officer of the Government when this plan was prepared?—*[showing a plan]*.—No.
168. Do I understand you to say that within the area served by the proposed line it includes the mile and a half referred to by Mr. Barr; do you go to the mile and a half in addition?—I go a mile and a half in addition. My opinion is that if the mile and a half is added the line would pay much better than only going to the end of the present survey.
169. You include the mile and a half, and therefore the figures to the 7 miles 71 chains would not be what you gave?—No; it would reduce the area coloured brown by 8,000 to 10,000 acres.
170. How far on each side of the line do you take?—The land I put down at 11,000 acres, I took an average of about two miles on each side.
171. Do you take Mr. Barr's area of five miles to make up your quantity?—In the second and third portions.
172. That would hardly be enough, would it?—There is a considerable amount of land lying back outside of my shire I am not competent to speak of.
173. You have given 42,000 acres; what distance from the line would be required to give that?—I would take about three to four miles back until you get to the top of the line; three and a half on each side of the line, but when you get to the top—
174. Have I made myself understood. According to the figures you gave Mr. Melville, you say 11,000 acres from £6 to £12, 15,000 acres from £2 to £4, and 16,000 acres from £4 to £4 10s., that is 42,000 acres; should we not have more than 42,000 acres if we take the full ten miles and three miles and a half on each side?—I do not think so. I have gone much further for the last portion, under the 32nd section.
175. You do not give me areas enough?—I gave 50,000 acres.
176. You have given now only 42,000 acres. You say 50,000 acres selected—the land not touched, where is the balance of the land?—The balance of the land is that portion lying north of the terminus where I say the line should be carried.
177. Suppose the Committee read your evidence with the view of taking the increased value, and in looking up the figures we find we have only 42,000 acres, and yet you have given us 50,000 acres selected, we will not know where the rest has gone to?—I do not see that land outside the area I have given would be increased to any extent.
178. Where would that be. I understood you gave us the brown. You say it would not be increased to five miles?—After the three miles and a half (that is the arable land which increases at a higher rate), then comes the land at the north end, the only portion at present unimproved; that should be, as fee-simple, worth about £2.

179. *By Mr. Tucker.*—Did you not take the land three and a half miles each side?—Yes.
180. The line is nine miles and a-fifth in length; that comes out 40,000 odd, commencing at the terminus; should you not go beyond?—No.
181. You go ahead?—I go a long way ahead.
182. The line serves the people within three miles of the terminus?—You must know from the terminus there is a narrow neck of land that does not average three miles.
183. You say 40,000 acres are affected by the line?—Over 60,000 acres by the line.
184. Directly affected?—Directly affected, if carried on to the Latrobe.
185. How far do you go ahead of the proposed terminus?—Fully ten miles. I go to the top of the range.
186. *By the Hon. J. Buchanan.*—Is that land well timbered?—Yes.
187. *By the Chairman.*—Do you say 60,000 acres would be affected, or 42,000?—Sixty thousand.
188. What do you do with the other 18,000 acres?—That is also increased in value; that is portion of the territory north.
189. What is the increase?—Ten shillings that land would be increased; it is now absolutely valueless.
190. That mile and a half ahead?—No, the land ten or eleven miles north of the Latrobe River.
191. You surely get the enhanced value?—Yes.
192. Is it not included in the 18,000 acres?—No. You can make that the amount to make it up to the amount, and go fully ten miles to the north.
193. Some is increased?—Yes.
194. If valueless now, what will it be worth with the railway?—Thirty shillings to £2.
195. You are valuer to the shire?—Yes.
196. What is the average rate put on to this land?—Which?
197. Take any you like?—The agricultural land I value from £5 to £10 per acre capital value, and the rates are based on 5 per cent.
198. *By Mr. Tucker.*—Land actually under cultivation?—Grass and cultivation.
199. *By the Chairman.*—What other classification?—Then land only valuable for grass, that is £2 to £5 an acre. Then we come to land that has only just been taken up, and which it is very doubtful what value can be placed on it.
200. At any value?—Yes, they are rated varying from 10s. to 25s. per block.
201. Three hundred and twenty acres?—Three hundred and twenty acres up to 600 or 700, according to the position in which situated, and the probable value of it.
202. And is your valuation not less than 5 per cent. on the capital value?—In that case they are tenants of the Crown.
203. Under the Local Government Act, on what system do you value?—We estimate it as near as possible at what that land will return as soon as it is improved. We take as low a rate on it as we possibly can.
204. Are you not bound by the section which says, "Not less than 5 per cent."?—No, this is Crown land.
205. Do you know that section, and that under the Local Government Act you are not supposed to rate at less than 5 per cent.?—Yes; but we do not on that portion.
206. You say £5 to £10?—Yes.
207. You are taking that, irrespective of what it is used for?—Irrespective of what used for. Where the land is rated through township prices, although not returning a fourth, it is valued higher. I know some that has been rated at £16.
208. Are there any pieces of land worth £40 an acre?—No.
209. Any worth £30 on any part of the proposed line, or on the line in course of construction?—I do not think so.
210. Is there any worth £20 from where we started this morning?—Yes; one 20-acre block in Neerim South was sold at £30, I think.
211. Is this a three to one shire?—Yes.
212. How many railways have been made in the shire?—The main Gippsland line only, and the Neerim line.
213. Has there been much increase in the valuation since the line was opened?—Yes.
214. Tell us what it was?—Only in the Warragul shire; it has not been brought into the Buln Buln shire.
215. What do you think the shire valuation will be increased by this railway?—Previous to the line being opened I know one block sold for £15 during the time of the land high prices, and it afterwards realized £24 per acre.
216. Consequently there will be an increase of rates in consequence of the construction of the railway?—Yes.
217. And an increased endowment of the shire?—Yes, if the endowment is continued.
218. I suppose there will be no doubt there will be something next year to be taken out of it?—I hope so.
219. What do you reckon will be the increased endowment in consequence of the increased value made by the railway?—The portion you mean will be very trifling; the only portion in our shire is the very poorest description almost in our shire.
220. What will be the increased enhancement all round?—It will be just at the terminus.
221. Go back to the enhancement of the 42,000 acres; take it on the part of the line in course of construction—how far is that?—Three miles and a half, I think.
222. Will you not get the three to one on the increase as well as what you now get?—It does not occur directly the railway is made. I think your question was, how much will the increase be this year on the line constructed or about to be constructed. I say the increase will be very small.
223. How much will it be?—It goes through a very poor portion of our land; it only just touches the good land.
224. It will in one of the classes, you say?—Yes, in Neerim East it will be about 3 per cent.
225. You will get an increased endowment?—Not this year, the year after.

226. You will get an increased endowment as well as a railway?—Yes, if continued; but we could not get that for eighteen months.
227. *By Mr. Tucker.*—Did you not say 42,000 acres was increased in value?—In time.
228. You say 11,000 acres increased from £6 to £12?—Yes.
229. Take an average of £9—that is £99,000?—Yes.
230. Then you say 15,000 acres increased from £2 to £4?—Yes.
231. Then 16,000 acres increased by 10s.; that is £8,000, making a total capital value of, say, £150,000?—Yes, that is the ultimate increase, but taking many years to get at.
232. That is an increase of £15,000?—Yes.
233. That would bring an increased endowment from the Government of £375 per annum?—In the course of years.
234. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—What is the total revenue from rates, this riding?—£1,230 11s.
235. And what is the population?—I have not got that.
236. *By Mr. Woods.*—Have you any blocks that have been taken up that are left absolutely idle, blocks that have been taken up for speculative purposes?—I could not say; I think there are some in the northern portions. Many of the holders tell me they have not got their leases.
237. Assuming that you have some that are idle, will you tell me whether they are rated, and if so, how?—They are rated on a very low scale.
238. How, in proportion?—About 10s. for the first year.
239. What are the others rated at—the neighbouring blocks?—As soon as they have improved they are rated a little higher. We cannot go to 5 per cent. on Crown lands; they are always rated higher than we could recover.

The witness withdrew.

Thomas Short, sworn and examined.

240. *By the Chairman.*—What are you?—Civil engineer.
241. Certificated?—Yes.
242. Do you thoroughly understand railway working?—I do.
243. What length of time have you been engaged in that work?—About ten years.
244. Do you know the line under consideration?—Only the portion from Neerim.
245. Have you made sections of it?—Yes.
246. Have you got them?—I have—[*producing the same*].
247. At whose instigation did you make those?—At the instigation of Mr. Cushing and others.
248. Gentlemen interested in the country?—Yes.
249. The gradient is 1 in 40?—Yes, from a point in Mr. Wilson's property, where it deviates to the west, and the continued portion is to the Latrobe Valley. The grade is very great from the river to the top of the hill. The line is 31 chains further than the proposed railway surveyed by the Government.
250. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—That would improve the grade?—I was asked if it was possible to get a grade.
251. *By the Chairman.*—What is the cost for the extension of a mile and a half?—About £8,000 a mile.
252. Can you give us an idea of your prices. On what are they based. What is the deepest cutting?—About 40 feet. I simply had to take the first section I could get. I could not get a better grade—a grade of 44 or 45. I only had two days at it.
253. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—Would it be a great deviation to get that?—No.
254. *By Mr. Woods.*—It is about 1 in 40·25 grade?—Yes.
255. *By the Chairman.*—I will read what the surveyor said—“From the present termination of the permanent survey it will be possible to extend the line in a westerly direction to the watershed between the Latrobe and Little Yarra rivers. The line would be a rough one, as it would require to run along the face of ridge to the south to avoid crossing gullies at too high an elevation. I have dotted an approximate route which the line would follow on the accompanying tracing.” Do you agree with that?—I did not explore that country at all. I go almost due north.
256. You take a different route altogether. Is that not the same country?—No. He goes to the left. I go almost due north from that point in Wilson's property.
257. A different course?—Yes.
258. And cheaper?—I could not give an opinion.
259. What is the length?—I believe he goes out to the forest.
260. You would not contradict the surveyor in what he says?—No.
261. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—After you made to the river at your point, it would not be so convenient to continue the line further?—I could go on from where I left off, if I wanted to go up the valley about a mile and a half.
262. Give us some of your prices for the work?—The 31 chains would cost about £2,500. It would cost £450 a mile for clearing and grubbing; fencing—posts and three rails, local timbers, £80 per mile.
263. A running mile?—One side. Post, and two rails and three wires, £75 per mile; posts, one rail and five wires, £65 per mile; round corner-posts, 12 inches diameter, 2s. 6d. per post; square corner-posts, 8 inches by 8 inches, 10s. per post. The local timbers are: Mountain ash, bluegum and whitegum, red and white appletree, silvertop or white ironbark, messmate, stringybark, blackwood, myrtle or beech, blackbutt, and sassafras.
264. What for sleepers?—Bluegum I would use, or approved messmate.
265. What do you put down for sleepers?—About 3s., and the price for redgum, ironbark, or box, about 4s.; earthwork, cuttings, at per yard, 1s. 6d. to 2s.; surface formings, 17s. 6d. per chain; side ditches, 1s. per cubic yard; side-cuttings, 1s. 3d. per cubic yard; back-cuttings, 2s. 3d. per yard; excavations for culverts, foundations, &c., 1s. 3d. per cubic yard; excavations for creek diversions, 2s. 6d. per cubic yard; surplus stuff for each quarter mile lead, 9d. per cubic yard; hardwood in box culverts, 2s. 6d. per cubic foot; piles, 24in., 20in., 18in., 16in., 12in., 1s. 3d. per foot; hardwood for bridges, 2s. 6d. per cubic foot. These prices are guaranteed by the local people. The prices have been higher than these. These would be low prices, but they are only for local timber.

266. What people guarantee those prices?—Saw-millers—McDonalds, for one—small contractors will do the particular works at these prices.
267. *By the Chairman.*—Would you think it better to let the railway in sections ahead, say a mile, to enable the local people to carry out the works?—No.
268. Do you think it would be wise to recommend that course to Parliament?—I would not like to give an opinion without consideration.
269. Then what are we to do?—I think local timbers should be used.
270. Do you think it would be wise for this Committee to recommend to Parliament that this line should be let in sections?—No.
271. What about the small contractors?—Those are the prices they would do it for.
272. You say you would not advise that course?—No, you would have to add on 12½ per cent. for contractor's profit.
273. Taking the line under consideration, would you suggest a lighter line than now used, and a lower rate of speed. From the rough nature of the country do you think that would be wise?—Yes.
274. What kind of line would you suggest?—Far less ballast, second-class sleepers, lighter line, and trucks, and engine, and carriages.
275. Would you be able to go on existing lines on the system you suggest?—Yes. I would not suggest an alteration of the gauge.
276. What weight of engine would you recommend?—Twenty to 25 tons.
277. What is the present weight of engines?—Forty to 75 tons.
278. That weight would cut up a light road?—Yes, in wet weather.
279. If we were to ask you, could you tell us anything about the Victorian railways?—Yes, I have been on nearly all of them.
280. For the contractors?—For the Government. I am on leave at the present time, as there are no railways going on.

The witness withdrew.

Arthur Edney, sworn and examined.

281. *By the Chairman.*—What are you?—Shire contractor.
282. For this shire?—Yes.
283. Have you done works for the shire?—Yes.
284. Do you wish to speak about the price of works on the proposed railway?—I have no interest in the railway.
285. Do you know the particular track we are speaking about?—I have not been along the line. I have been through the district, and know the country well.
286. What evidence do you wish to give?—The evidence, I think, would be to answer questions about cost or details.
287. Take earthworks—what is the price of earthworks in cuttings; would you know what the cuttings would be like—say half-a-mile lead?—About 2s.
288. Do you get 2s.?—Yes, for half-a-mile lead. There would not be many half-mile leads.
289. Taking the average grade, what would it be a yard?—Tenpence to 2s., according to the lead—that would be an average of 1s. 4d.
290. And the side-cuttings and back-cuttings?—Side-cuttings about 8d.
291. Approaches to roads and formations?—It depends on the length.
292. And the metalling?—The metalling would be worth 5s. to 9s. a yard. It depends whether it is crushed.
293. Is there not some place on the proposed line where the material could be got—close to the line, and run down by trucks?—Yes, there are one or two quarries just being opened.
294. Would it cost 9s.?—No, about 5s.
295. If you do not know do not say. If you come as an expert what is the use of saying “about 9s.” I could bring it from Berwick for that?—No, 5s. at Berwick.
296. I have a report about a quarry?—In Hogan's land, I believe, in my opinion, the ballast should be got for 5s. a yard.
297. *By Mr. Groom.*—If crushing machines were put in?—Yes.
298. *By the Chairman.*—The surveyor says, “There is an outcrop of good bluestone on the road a few chains south of the angle of the main road in Coe and Lacey's selection, abreast of 14 miles 30 chains, and extending east and west from the outcrop for a considerable distance.” Do you know that?—No.
299. Would this be as good?—Yes.
300. What would be the cost?—Five shillings.
301. Do you agree with the last witness about the prices of each of the kinds of fencing?—Yes.
302. What else can you tell us?—Nothing else.
303. Anything about the bridges?—The prices given by the last witness.
304. What about sleepers?—I think he is a little high. I think it should be about half-a-crown.
305. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—What kind?—Bluegum.
306. *By the Chairman.*—Would it be considered a suitable timber?—Yes. It is a very durable timber.
307. *By Mr. Woods.*—They have been putting in whitegum?—That is where the mistake comes in.
308. *By the Chairman.*—Where do you live?—At Drouin.
309. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—Suppose you were told to construct a suitable railway for the district on to the 7 miles 71 chains, about what price per mile could you do it for?—I would have to go into detail. I am not prepared to answer that.
310. You have not formed, in your own mind, an estimate of the probable cost, looking at our present railways?—No, I have not.
311. *By the Chairman.*—Is there anything else you can tell us which would be for the welfare of the country in connexion with the line?—Nothing that I know of.

The witness withdrew.

Adjourned.

(At Neerim South.)

Adam English, sworn and examined.

312. *By the Chairman.*—What do you wish to tell the Committee about the line from Neerim South to Neerim North?—My opinion is, if it is extended seven miles and a half it will not pay, in consequence of the country beyond not being settled, and there is no population to support it. The land on the west and the north is excessively poor.

313. You mean beyond the 7 miles 71 chains?—Yes; half-a-mile from the terminus the line runs into poor country.

314. Give us some evidence about the country from the line under construction up to the 7 miles 71 chains?—The land is good until you get near the Latrobe, and beyond that it is poor. My opinion is that if an extension is to take place from Neerim it should go east, because there is a quantity of good land on that route, but not yet opened out. A survey was promised to be made, but it was never done. There are about 73,000 acres beyond the boundaries of this shire, from eight to twelve miles from here, which is excellent land, and the people there would no doubt come to this line if it is made. The Government is also constructing a road from the Latrobe to Moondarra, and they are spending about £1,000 in opening out the country. The land in Noojee and Noojee East is a great deal better than what it is on the west side, and more extensive; still, there is very little population, and the people would be quite satisfied to have it stay here until the country is opened. The land in the parish of Ellinging and Noojee riding, due north, is about 12,642 acres, and the shire valuation is £343. If you strike a line due north of this road, there are that number of acres taken up, and about 20 people living on it. I have very little more to say. I agree with Mr. Cooke about the quality of the land from Neerim South to the Latrobe River being exceptionally good, but the other is bad.

315. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—Does the non-improvement of the land there not arise from the fact that there is no accommodation in the way of access?—It might partly.

316. Do you think the land beyond this certain point is so absolutely bad that settlement will not go further?—I say it is good to the Latrobe.

317. If it is good as far as the Latrobe, is it not desirable that the railway should go so far?—I do not know.

318. I thought you said it should stop here?—There is no settlement on the land there.

319. Does it not extend to the east and the west?—Very little; it is just the same as the north.

320. We drove up this morning, and saw a lot of country to the north, cleared as far as the ringing of trees is concerned?—You might see some at Jindivick.

321. We saw some up north from here?—That is further back.

322. Is not one of the most paying elements in the line supposed to be the timber traffic?—I do not think so. I had the privilege of going there with mails for years back, and I do not think so.

323. Have they the facilities to cart the timber now to a line?—The same as they had; they used to cart twenty miles to Drouin.

324. If you were carting timber you would get it as near as you could to a railway?—Yes.

325. Is that not one of the reasons why they do not cart it now, the distance?—The trade has died out.

326. Is there no demand now for it?—No; where there is one team now there used to be 20 or 30.

327. You say there are about 20 people on that land?—Yes, about.

328. What kind of timber is there?—Stringybark, messmate, and bluegum.

329. Is it good for firewood?—Yes.

330. Is that not a good crop to bring to market?—The gum timber is no good for saw-milling.

331. If you cannot get the crop of wood off the ground, how could you justify the Committee in recommending the line to carry potatoes, and oats, and so on?—The carriage to here is 1d. a ton per mile; have you thought that out?—No. But there is plenty of bluegum timber on the east, not on the west; due east from here hundreds of acres of little else but bluegum.

332. Then a new line of survey you think should be made?—Yes.

333. This Committee is only given a certain line to consider?—I think the line should stop here until the country is examined.

334. This is the place—[pointing to a plan].—Is this the forest reserve?—Yes.

335. Do you think the line ought to go at right angles to that instead of to the Latrobe?—The Loch River.

336. Could you turn off there?—I have not examined the country.

337. Surely then the department must have made a mistake in going that route?—I say it should be examined to the east, which they have not done.

338. Two or three miles off?—Yes.

339. Do you represent to the Committee that they should recommend instead of this line a new line altogether?—A trial survey from Neerim, not Neerim South.

340. You are satisfied with the survey to Neerim?—Yes.

341. And then you say they should turn to the east?—Yes, to the Latrobe.

342. You do not recommend, in the public interest, the construction of the line from Neerim to this point?—I do not think it would pay, because this country is not inhabited.

343. Was this country here always inhabited?—Not until we took the country up.

344. The people go back further?—They have not shown they could produce anything to support a railway.

345. Have you been on that country?—I have.

346. Is there anything equal to the country we passed through this morning?—No, not to the east.

347. Do you see a track on this plan—[pointing]—on the south bank of the Latrobe—what is the object of that; would that go through good country?—Not very.

348. What do you mean by "Not very"?—Second rate.

349. What is first-rate country worth?—About £10 to £12 an acre.

350. Is this worth £5 to £6?—No.

351. What is second-rate worth?—£3 to £4.

352. Is it all taken up?—No; some taken up and given up.
353. Is there lots of Government land about?—Many thousands of acres, both east and west.
354. *By Mr. Groom.*—Timber reserves?—In Neerim East there is country nearly valueless.
355. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—Yet that is where you want the line to go?—No. This is where the good country is, where you see the fringe of the blue on the plan.
356. You advise it to go through the forest here?—Yes—[*explaining on the map*].
357. *By the Hon. J. Buchanan.*—What is the nature of the soil here—is it granite?—In Nayook there are 18,000 acres let for £18 a year. It is granite, and the only thing is the timber on it.
358. Is it all granite?—All granite country.
359. In the other direction is it equal to this?—All red soil in the red till you come to the Latrobe. It is poor till you get away into the red country.
360. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—You heard the shire valuer's evidence?—Yes.
361. In support of this railway going ten miles back. Do you agree with him?—No; because the people are not living on the land. They have had it for nothing for several years, and they produce nothing.
362. The first two miles would be all right?—Yes, up to the Latrobe.
363. And after you get to the Latrobe you get into granite country?—Yes.
364. Would not those two miles of extension be of some value to the people who are on the two miles?—Yes; it would help them to sell the land.
365. And the same thing all along the line?—Yes; and a good many would sell.
366. I hope that is not the only reason why you ask for the railway. You do not wish the Committee to understand that it is to do that?—No, I do not.
367. Would there be any difficulty in getting from the Latrobe to your place?—Crossing the Latrobe.
368. Would it be a serious difficulty, are you able to say?—I am not able to say. It would require an engineer to say that.
369. If the Committee recommend the construction of the two miles, would it prevent a line in the direction you advocate?—It would be so much money thrown away.
370. How "thrown away"?—Because it is going north-west instead of going east.
371. Would there not be room for another?—Not at the present time. If you stopped the line here all the producers are within three or four miles of this point.
372. Does not this State forest interfere with your project?—No, because it will be all thrown open.
373. Do you think so?—Yes; they have thrown open some. There were 60 applicants for 320 acres a fortnight since.
374. Is it to the advantage of the people here to have the State forest thrown open?—Yes.
375. *Mr. Tucker.*—It is not State forest, it is a timber reserve.
376. *By the Hon. D. Melville (to the witness).*—How much do you say the land is worth?—About £10 an acre.
377. How much more will it be worth if the Committee adopt this line?—It would be worth about £2 an acre more.
378. You heard the evidence given this morning?—I did not agree with it.
379. How much will the increase be from this point to the Latrobe?—The nearer you get to the Latrobe the land is not of much value.
380. How much do you think the railway would add to the value?—It might add 10s.
381. Are you interested in this individually—have you any land along this line?—Yes; the two miles extension goes through mine.
382. The Committee ask the question wherever they go. They say, "What is the value of your land—what would you require for severance." What would the State have to pay you for what they propose to take from you, including severance?—It would be serious for us, because we have a good business site, and they propose to put a bank about 20 feet high, and it would spoil my business.
383. What would you want?—About £1,000.
384. And for the land?—£12 an acre.
385. And £1,000 besides?—Yes. There is another thing, they would spoil our water supply.
386. You are interested in how many acres?—Six hundred and forty. This spot is within half-a-mile of our land.
387. The evidence of the shire valuer is that 50 per cent. would be added to the valuation by the construction of the line; how would you be then, if that were so?—I do not think it would.
388. Supposing I bring two or three witnesses who state that you would have £6 an acre added to the value of your estate by the construction of the line, would you then insist upon being paid, provided you had something on the other side?—That would depend on the betterment clause, if it were applied. If it were applied all round I would let it go free.
389. You approve of the betterment clause?—If applied all round.
390. You would suggest, if there were advantages by getting the railway, the betterment clause should be applied?—Yes.
391. Would you regard this as a paying railway?—To a certain point.
392. To the point you speak of—you do not want it to go past Neerim?—No; I do not think it would pay.
393. What about your neighbours—do you think you are doing them full justice. How many neighbours have you from this point to the north?—About a dozen.
394. All large holders?—Principally.
395. There are 12,000 acres?—Yes, adjoining the line.
396. How many neighbours on the line?—A dozen.
397. Again from the point backwards?—Between Neerim South and Neerim, about 75 holders.
398. That is only 87 holders on the whole line?—Yes, up to there—[*pointing to the plan*].
399. *By Mr. Tucker.*—When was this land taken up?—Sixteen or seventeen years it is since I selected.

400. Was most of the land that would be affected by this line taken up then?—Yes, most of it.
401. You see the railway you advocate is about three miles and a half from the present terminus?—Five miles and so many chains.
402. Seeing that the present railway terminus must serve the first two miles, there are only three miles to be benefited?—The bulk of the producers are there now.
403. Do you know how the blue portion on the plan is occupied?—They are cutting it up into blocks.
404. Has block "E" never been applied for?—It was pastoral, but they are surveying into 320-acre blocks.
405. Do you think that would be taken up readily?—Yes.
406. You say the land is of excellent quality?—Yes; and when you get towards Moondarra it is quite level.
407. This is the way you justify the line going towards the east, because there is a block of 34,000 acres being subdivided, which would be rushed?—Yes, and there is a large place besides, but they are so far from a road that they cannot get out.
408. Suppose a line was made through that block, and a reserve left of a mile and a half each side of the line to sell for the payment of the line?—Yes, I think that would be a good thing. The enhanced value of it would pay for the line.
409. Do you think that would sell readily?—Yes.
410. What would it sell for?—For £2 an acre.
411. In its native state?—Yes. Land has been sold here for £12.
412. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—You recommend the Committee to advise that this line be kept back?—Yes, until the country has been opened up.
413. Would you prefer there should be no extension of the railway at all rather than handing over the right to run through your property at a less price than £1,000. Would you rather have no line?—Yes, rather be as I am by a long way.
414. *By the Chairman.*—You were speaking of the paying qualities of the line. How much do you think would be the revenue of the line, the 7 miles 71 chains, annually?—I could not say. The witness coming after me has made some calculations which he can give.
415. Do you know the revenue from the existing line?—No, I have no idea.
416. Do you think it would pay £4,000 a year?—It is only Neerim that supports what is open.
417. I am speaking of the 7 miles 71 chains; the estimated cost is £77,000 to the department, and the interest at 4 per cent., as I think I am justified in putting it, would be something like £3,080, and taking 70 per cent. of the takings to run it, would you, as a business man spending your own money, recommend the making of that line?—I would not.
418. What do you think we are to think about it—what are we to recommend to Parliament, we having sworn to do our duty?—It is for you to deduct from the other evidence.
419. There is a proposal to run a railway from Longwarry to Jindivick—would that be a competing line?—No, the hills cut them off.
420. From the character of the country?—Yes.
421. Would it pay?—I think it would pay moderately where there is a good timber traffic. It cuts into good country, and it would be an easily constructed line.
422. Without speaking of your own property, have you any idea of what the State could obtain the remainder of the track from the owners of the land for?—I do not think you would get any for less than £10 an acre without the betterment clause. If you bought the land from the owners they would want about £10 an acre.
423. Including severance?—Yes.
424. Do you think that the line, as suggested, is as good a track as could be got, or could you improve on it, from your local knowledge?—I do not think so.
425. The surveyor says—"No line on the top of the table land to the south of the Latrobe would greatly benefit the Noojee East settlers as regards giving them an outlet for their produce, as the Latrobe River has to be crossed, and an elevation of 600 feet ascended in a short distance before reaching the railway. This also applies to the eastern portion of Noojee; settlers in western portion are rather more favorably situated, as they have only 400 feet to rise from the Latrobe, and have a fairly long spur on which to get a grade; but I am of opinion that the best route to open up the valley of the Latrobe is from Lilydale, both as regards length of line, from Melbourne, and gradients." What do you say to that?—I have not experience of the Lilydale route.
426. Touching east and west—you spoke of the Latrobe?—I told you there is the difficulty of crossing the Latrobe.
427. He says—"No line on the top of the table land to the south of the Latrobe would greatly benefit the Noojee East settlers as regards giving them an outlet for their produce, as the Latrobe River has to be crossed, and an elevation of 600 feet ascended in a short distance before reaching the railway." Having heard that, do you agree with that?—Yes.
428. If you do agree with that, how does it come in with regard to the eastern route which you advocate?—It is the eastern route that I am referring to. I say there is great difficulty in crossing the Latrobe River, but the good ground lies to the east.
429. What do you say if he says to go on the west. It is the best way to go to Lilydale. Is there any other way of getting to that 32,000 acres, without regard to distance?—No.
430. Then where are we with the 600 feet—ballooning, I should think?—I do not know.

The witness withdrew.

Francis Barr, sworn and examined.

431. *By the Chairman.*—You have heard the evidence of Mr. English?—Yes.
432. To what extent do you agree. Do you agree with him, or do you desire to supplement what he has said?—All the evidence I can give is of a general character. The other gentlemen will have to supply the filling in.
433. How far do you agree with Mr. English?—I agree with Mr. English to a great extent.

434. Where do you differ?—Mr. English's evidence has been at great length, and on the spur of the moment I cannot say more.

435. Can you supplement what he has said?—I can supplement it so far as to give pretty strong evidence in favour of the extension to a point, that is, to here. I can say, clearly, it would be wise on the part of the Railway Board to make the extension.

436. Do you limit the extension to 5 miles or to 7 miles 71 chains?—Five miles and a half.

437. Not to the 7 miles 71 chains?—No.

438. You have good grades?—Yes. It is very clear in a short time the line would pay well. In the first place, in the construction of the line the difficulties have been overcome. There is only a mile and a half. After that it is comparatively easy sailing. The estimated cost cannot be what it has been said.

439. Do you know what the present lines cost—that is, the contract price?—I forget. I know the estimates are so different.

440. I want to get the figures in. I will give you the Government figures—they are £9,654 a mile?—The estimate for the proposed line?

441. They take the five miles and a half without either extension?—It would tend to open up the country and allow them to get quit of the useless timber, which they say they cannot do now, and to grow crops of potatoes in particular. This becomes a necessity in this part of the country for the ground to be broken up, for, as you can see, it is being fast overrun with scrub and bracken fern. Until the timber is taken out, and two or three crops taken off it, and the country put down in grass, the country will not be put to its proper use, nor pay the people working it. Therefore, in breaking up the country, it is inevitable that a large amount of produce must be grown. You have seen to-day what the country can grow. Oats and grass seeds could be grown in large quantities, which, in a great measure, would be sent down by rail to the large cities, and this, irrespective of timber, would throw a large amount of traffic on to the line as well as swelling the traffic on the main line. There are two or three timber reserves held for a considerable time as a mineral reserve, some sixteen or eighteen years, on account of some shale, which is supposed to be either kerosene shale or some denomination of coal, and although parties asked to have it thrown open to selection it was held closed. There is a quantity of fine land in that reserve, some of it quite equal to any land you have seen here to-day, but not superior to it. There are some portions of it that, if it was put up by Government auction, I should be very glad to get 100 acres of it at, say, £10 an acre, just as it is with the scrub on it. I would readily give that for a portion of it.

442. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—Does the line pass through any portion of your land?—It passes not very far from my property.

443. Will it add anything to the value of your property?—Yes.

444. How much do you think?—From its present price, not very much, because, although the fact of the permanent survey being made has added to the value, as soon as the permanent survey was made the appraiser for the shire doubled the valuation at once. He said they had arranged the line of railway, and that was the reason. He said, "This is certain now," but I have no doubt it will add £3 or £4 an acre to the present value.

445. You want the railway to stop at this point here, not to go on to the Latrobe?—Yes.

446. The land is not good enough beyond the Latrobe?—I put it like this, to this point it is a certainty.

447. What certainty?—You have a good area of land each side of the railway to the Latrobe, and it would give a facility to the good land on which anything had been done which is within two miles of the present railway station. Any one two miles from a station is not in a bad position.

448. You are opposed to carrying it up to the Latrobe, but what about the people who live in the granite country. Is the mere fact of a man living in the granite country sufficient to say he is never to get a railway?—Many of them will clear out of that.

449. The country should be occupied even if it is granite, it is in other parts of Victoria?—I do not object if it is feasible. To this point you can see the feasibility. There are two sections of the people; one section says the line should go here, and the other says there.

450. You say it is good to the Latrobe—is it heavily timbered to the Latrobe?—I cannot say.

451. How are you adverse to its going there?—I am not. This is my view. We are all parties agreed to this point. Then one section says it should go this way, and the other that way; all the people are settled down to this point. They will all be benefited by a station here, and if the line of railway is constructed here, and allows the district to develop for a few years, it will be seen then in which direction it should go.

452. Suppose we withhold the whole railway for a few years, what then?—I have no objection to going to the Latrobe, but I think it is a pity the step should be taken in a hurry, and then to say, "It is a pity we did that."

453. You want to tell the Committee that you do not know much about the granite country beyond the Latrobe?—No.

454. No knowledge of the timber or the country?—No.

455. But as far as the Latrobe it is good land?—Yes.

456. We saw some this morning, is it all equal to that?—No.

457. Is it red soil?—Of that nature, but not equal to what you saw.

458. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—Should the same principle be applied to what is to be constructed, as you suggest—to wait till the country will develop?—No.

459. You want us to construct the line to this point?—I am not interested.

460. You think you made a mistake when you said that every one was agreed with the construction to this point?—Yes.

461. Were you present at the school-house this morning?—Yes.

462. Did you hear them all swearing that they wanted it up to the Latrobe?—There is no difference of opinion up to this point, but up to that there is a difference.

463. To Neerim, two miles and a half from here?—No; just here.

464. Your principle of advocacy of this line is, that the land should be "burst up"?—It would be a long way better if it were. One hundred acres is plenty for any man of the good land. A man could make a good living and keep a family upon that.

465. Would that not apply to the country north?—A great deal of it up there would be. I would not thank the Government for a thousand acres going out towards the tin mines.

466. *By Mr. Tucker.*—Do you know the area of the timber reserve?—The temporary reserve, 8,000 acres.

467. And that would be taken up readily?—My idea from the first was, if the Government cut it up and sold it in 50 or 100 blocks, they could get £10 an acre.

468. Would you suggest to the Committee to recommend to the Department of Lands that the land should not be cut up at present, but should be kept and be used eventually for paying for the railway?—**Yes.**

469. What would it fetch—the 8,000 acres—take the average?—It would bring £5 an acre.

470. The land in block “E” is good land?—I am not acquainted with that.

471. The timber reserve. Would you recommend the Committee to call on the Lands Department to withhold that land to endow the railway?—Yes.

472. *By the Chairman.*—Do you know what it costs to take the goods to the railway?—No.

473. You see five and a half miles costs £53,000—do you think the carriage would pay the interest upon that?—Yes. With agriculture and timber, there are large timber reserves Jindivick way, and that timber would have to go that way.

474. I take the five and a half miles—would the traffic pay £3,500 a year?—Yes, as soon as it got time to develop.

475. In how many years. The interest runs from date?—About three or four.

476. That is four years rest?—Yes.

477. How long would the timber last, supposing it is cut at the rate spoken of here?—Take the timber altogether, one place with another. As far as I am aware, there are large areas of good timber, and, unless there were a multitude of mills at once, with only ten or twelve mills it would be almost inexhaustible. You would have the young timber growing up.

478. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—Have you ever carted a ton of goods from your place to the railway station?—Yes.

479. How much did it cost. You have been asked the question and could not answer?—I do not know how to answer.

480. How much to take a ton to the present station. How far is it?—About four miles.

481. How much to take a ton of potatoes, if it is four miles?—Mr. English, a carter, charges £1 a ton for thirteen miles.

482. *By Mr. McIntyre (to the witness).*—Is that your evidence. How did you take the stuff?—One of my sons and I yoked up a team.

483. How many horses?—Two.

484. What did you take?—Half a ton of cheese.

485. Under a ton, and that would take a day?—Yes, that would take a day to the present station.

486. Coming and going?—Yes.

487. What do you estimate that at?—I suppose about 12s.

488. You say 12s., and Mr. English says £1, that is twelve or thirteen miles?—Yes.

The witness withdrew.

Alfred Davis Preston, sworn and examined.

489. *By the Chairman.*—What are you?—Builder and contractor.

490. Where do you reside?—Drouin, but I have some land. I have a sketch prepared to show the proposed diversion.

491. Is there a diversion petitioned for?—Yes.

492. Do you represent those petitioners?—Yes.

493. Is that about where Mr. Barr was speaking of?—Mr. English.

494. Mr. Barr spoke about five and a half miles?—Yes. That is from where you are sitting, easterly.

495. That is a timber reserve of 7,000 acres?—You tap the reserve from that 5 miles 51 chains.

496. This is the line we have before us, and that is the one Mr. English spoke of—[*pointing to the plan*]?—Yes. I have the names of the selectors this side of the river. There are 40,000 odd acres selected, and we contend it would be easier to come to Neerim, 5 miles 51 chains (there are 87 selectors with 39,000 acres) than to go to the terminus as surveyed, because it is a mile and a half from the terminus, and we would be nearer by half-a-mile going to Neerim instead of to Neerim North. The selectors from a portion of Noojee, and Noojee East, and Toorong—there are 87 of them who contend the Committee would not be justified in going the two miles when we are nearer this point by half-a-mile. We ask that it may be taken in an easterly direction. There are 40,000 acres, and close on 60,000 acres to be thrown open, making in all about 100,000 acres.

497. *By Mr. Tucker.*—That is blocks “E” and “F”?—Yes. Here are the names of all those who have selected, and we have got a petition in asking Mr. Gillies for an extension, and he asked for an examination of the country.

498. *By the Chairman.*—Just describe what kind of road it is up to the country you speak of?—The only difficulty is getting down to the Latrobe. I want to show why we asked Mr. Gillies that; we want to serve Walhalla from that point. Here is the road we have to come—[*pointing to the plan*].

499. Where is your own little block?—Up here in Toorong.

500. How many acres have you?—Four hundred and thirteen.

501. How far have you to come to the station now?—I reckon it will be about eleven miles to Neerim on the proposed line.

502. How far on the line in course of construction?—To the 5 miles 51 chains it would be ten miles.

503. What kind of road?—Splendid.

504. What character is the country?—I have been from my block south towards the junction of the Magpie and the Latrobe, and the land passed through is fully half of it first-class land, and the rest is very good second-class land.

505. Are all the people living on it?—No. It has only been selected lately. We have no roads yet; we have a track round the Loch, but no roads in that country yet.

506. You are simply putting the deviation forward to suit the locality where you reside?—No. I put it there to suit the people who are out there.

507. Supposing that it was possible that there was money enough to make the line to the Latrobe; did you hear the evidence given this morning?—Yes.

508. Supposing the line were up there, would you object to that?—I object to the line going where it would serve few people, and would not be a paying line.

509. Do you know the country?—Yes.

510. You heard the evidence of Mr. Cooke, and Mr. Barr, and Mr. Dowie. Do you differ from them?—Yes; from Mr. Dowie. I say the revenue from palings would not be half what he said.

511. We do not know the country, and we have to decide on the evidence that comes to us, which seems to be as opposite as the poles. You cannot settle your own affairs—what are we to do. They are ruffling up, and you are ruffling up. What are we to do with the evidence of the other three gentlemen; are we to believe you or them?—Mr. Barr said it was three-quarters of a mile from the Hall to the terminus, and if you take the plan you can see it is a mile and a half.

512. *Mr. Barr.*—In saying it was three-quarters of a mile, I meant in a straight line from the Hall. By the road it is more than three-quarters of a mile.

513. *By the Chairman.*—Is it a mile and a half by railway?

514. *Mr. Barr.*—Not to follow the main road. From what point?

515. *The Chairman.*—I am leaving it to you gentlemen along the railway line. (*To the witness.*)—From the terminus in McCarty's is a mile and a half. (*To Mr. Barr.*)—When the surveyors surveyed that line they laid out the station on Wilson's land, and the terminus is practically there, but they were instructed to leave it in a position where they could get away, and they surveyed further on to see whether they could go on further with the line. The surveyor's report says—"On the completion of the permanent survey of the Warragul to Neerim line, I beg to report, as under, on the last length between 13 miles 50 chains and 22 miles. From the end of the station site at 13 miles 50 chains, the line follows the gully of the Red Hill Creek as far as 15 miles 60 chains, where it curves westerly in order to gain the summit of the watershed dividing the Latrobe and Tarwin rivers. On this ridge, between 17 miles 20 chains and 17 miles 50 chains, it is proposed to have a station. This would largely benefit the settlers to the east, as well as being available for those in the township of Neerim. Between 18 miles 75 chains and 19 miles 20 chains the ground is suitable for a station site. From this there would be a large traffic in timber, the proposed site being within two miles of the timber reserve, on which there remains a great amount of fine blackbutt timber. There is also a considerable area of good timber on private properties in close proximity. From 21 miles 10 chains to 21 miles 42 chains, there is a possible station site which would be used by settlers to the west and north."

516. *The Witness.*—I do not think the Committee would be justified in recommending the last two miles from Neerim. On behalf of the people in Noojee we would be satisfied if we got it.

The witness withdrew.

Charles Litaize, sworn and examined.

517. *By the Chairman.*—What are you?—A farmer.

518. What do you wish to inform the Committee. Where do you reside?—In Neerim.

519. What have you to say to us?—Not much. Only, according to my opinion, I would be against the extension to the west from Neerim. The 5 miles 51 chains I consider would be far enough for the present; or else, if you had an extension, I would consider it should go to the east, as it would benefit more settlers and better the country. I have travelled in the west and all round Noojee for three months before it was settled by any one. I know the class of country pretty well, and I think to the east would be the best, as it would go through better country and better timber—a large forest—and I think now, as the country is not properly opened, it would be better to stop at the 5 miles 51 chains, and wait until such time as produce could be had. In the new country there are no roads made, but I suppose after a certain length of time the country would be opened. The settlers would come from the north part of Noojee. It would be only about sixteen miles. Timber used to be carted from Neerim to Drouin, so it could be carted that distance. I consider for the present the extension would not be required. All the produce could be brought down as far as the 5 miles 51 chains.

520. How far are you from the proposed line?—I have a selection up north.

The witness withdrew.

Henry Beamish, sworn and examined.

521. *By the Chairman.*—You have heard the evidence of the various witnesses. How far do you agree with them; or do you differ from them, and if so, in what respect?—I disagree with the extension to the westward. I have been fourteen years here. I am a farmer, and live by the cultivation of the land. There has been very little evidence given about the soil and what it can produce. There is no doubt that in the eastern portion of the country one acre will produce as much stuff as ten acres in the west. I agree with the other witnesses.

The witness withdrew.

Thomas Hogan, sen., sworn and examined.

522. *By the Chairman.*—What are you?—Farmer.

523. Where do you reside?—Just the opposite side of the road.

524. Will the line run through your paddock?—If it comes up.

525. I will put one small question to you. Are you inclined to let the Government have it pretty cheap, or do you want a stiff price?—If it runs in the direction I think it ought to go, a moderate price.

526. What do you mean by "moderate," including severance?—Including severance or anything else. I am only to give evidence on the disputed route.

527. Supposing it comes to where Mr. English says it should?—In the first Bill it was 5 miles 51 chains.

528. You want it straightened?—If it goes further it ought to go north-east.

529. You are in favour of Mr. Preston's?—Yes.

530. It would not touch you?—Go right through here. Here is a plan—[*producing a plan*].—The permanent survey was made to this point, Neerim 5 miles 51 chains from the present contract lot, and then the surveyor paused here. He was going away, and then he got an order to go on to the west two miles and a quarter. I said, "I have never interfered with you, but I must interfere with you now. In my opinion it should run to the east," and Mr. Gillies sent me a plan out and told me to mark on the plan the way I wanted it to go. I sent in the plan marked this way to Coal Creek, and then this way to the east and north-east, and I said, "Any of those routes which the surveyors may think proper to make would suit me." This route to the east you say there is 600 feet to fall to get over the Latrobe. I say this was never tested.

531. Is not Mr. Rolland a decent man. He has signed this report?—I will explain to you. Mr. Rolland's survey went down there—[*pointing to the plan*].—and Mr. Field was sent to me, and I went over the route with him, backwards and forwards. He never saw the route until Mr. Rolland had nearly done the survey. I saw the road pretty clearly, and told Mr. Rolland about it. He made a bit of a flying survey, but never tested it all round in the proper places—the same as here.

532. How long is that ago?—About two years, I think. I said when he commenced this line, "You are going to make the railway for a few men who will not have as much work for it as will pay the engine-driver's wages." Here is the land at Mr. Stewart's, and before you get off Mr. Stewart's it is not worth having; useless for crops, for grazing. It is bad down to the Latrobe. There is a bit more. If you turn to the west you get into a country not worth having. The timber we looked at I told him a good saw-mill or two would clear all the saleable timber in a month or two. There is timber, such as it is. Rubbishing timber grows on good land near Neerim. Turn to the east. Here is about 300 acres next those blocks here—[*pointing to the plan*].

533. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—That is Hogan's blocks?—Yes. I have saved that timber from the beginning. I have let no one destroy it, waiting for a railway. It is equal to 50 trees to the acre. If there is a question of number, the length will make it up. I have put the trees down at 100 feet.

534. *By the Chairman.*—The question I asked you was what would you be inclined to charge, whichever route was taken, for the land you give up to the State?—I will not charge as much as they have allowed lower down. If you go from 5 miles 51 chains north-eastward you can have the land from my sons and others of us for £10 an acre.

535. Including severance?—Including severance; I mean from the 5 miles 51 chains.

536. Give us the other one?—It will all depend on the arrangement I can make with the Commissioners.

537. You are dealing with us now?—The view I have taken is this: If they take the line the way I want it, which will serve them I believe just as well, they will have it for half the money they will have it for if they go their way.

538. That is £5?—No, not that. Why, I was offered £20 an acre for that.

539. *By Mr. Tucker.*—You and your family own four blocks?—Yes.

540. You have not any land to the westward?—No, not of this lot.

541. There are two lines marked out as going through your land?—Yes.

542. One of them will cross three selections?—May be.

543. And the other will cross the whole four?—Yes.

544. For the land crossing the three selections you say the injury would be so little you would take £10, and that would start from the 5 miles 51 chains?—Yes.

545. And you would want considerably more if it went to the north and crossed all four blocks?—No; £10 from 5 miles 51 chains.

546. *By Mr. Groom.*—Is it £20 you want for block 21?—I will take £20 an acre, if they take the whole frontage. If they take the whole of the road frontage I will not take £100 an acre.

547. *By the Chairman.*—Which is the piece of land on this plan; is it the line we have starting from Jindivick?—This is the one—[*showing*].

548. This line would go in the way you do not want it?—It will take the same frontage off this block—[*pointing to his own plan*].

549. If it goes upon the line shown on the Government plan, I understand you want £100 an acre. It seems by this it will cut across your frontage to block 21?—If this line goes this way, as shown on the plan, I want £100 an acre.

550. What is the length, how far across?—Thirty-eight chains.

551. Nearly 4 acres?—About 17 acres, surveyed.

552. If it goes the other way you want £10?—Not that block.

553. On the same block?—If it goes eastward I will take £10.

554. How many acres are there in the family party?—One thousand one hundred acres, with the exception of a quarter of an acre.

555. *By the Hon D. Melville.*—Will that railway do you any good, the proposed railway to Neerim?—I have been working for it for twelve years.

556. It will add to the value of property all round?—Yes.

557. To yours?—Yes.

558. We have had it said 50 per cent.; do you think that true?—Not so much.

559. How much do you think?—It may add, for a man to pay rent; I think he would get about a third more rent. I want to show you the revenue the railway will get from the timber.

560. *By the Chairman.*—I will put another question. This railway will raise this 33 per cent. on 1,100 acres; how much an acre is that worth to-day?—The actual value of it just now, without a railway, is not much.

561. How much?—Everything is very cheap.

562. How much?—I was offered £20 an acre for one block of 30 acres. I was offered £12 an acre for the lot.

563. May I ask you, on your oath, what you think that 1,100 acres is worth all round?—I will tell you what I would take for it; but I would not sell for what it is worth. I think it is worth £13,000 or £14,000.

564. And you say it would be increased in value one-third if we had a railway?—Yes.

565. What do you feel inclined to give the State if they made a railway for you?—I would not mind giving a road through the three blocks for nothing. That would be as much as I could afford—8 or 10 acres.

566. Did you obtain that land by selection?—The three top blocks, and the other I bought.

567. How long ago?—Sixteen years.

568. On the shilling an acre principle?—Yes.

569. And we borrowed money from England to make a railway for you?—Yes.

The witness withdrew.

Alexander Stewart, sworn and examined.

570. *By the Chairman.*—What are you?—A farmer.

571. You have heard what has been said regarding the character of the country, and the distances of the proposed lines?—Yes.

572. What do you say to the evidence that has been given?—I have heard it stated that the land to the westward is no good. I can contradict that, and give you a good idea of what the land is. From Nayook, the station site is equal to anything in Neerim, and two or three selections beyond it extends. Two or three miles is not so good. It is a Government reserve, though at the other end it is splendid land, and two or three selectors are there. Immediately you go across the river at the end of the survey —

573. That is the extension of a mile and a half?—Yes, due north. Up to the head of the river and across the river is splendid. I have selected land there; it is heavily timbered—any quantity—immediately across the river.

574. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—On the west?—Yes.

575. *By the Chairman.*—You heard what Mr. Preston said?—Yes. I do not know how he could say it. I have land there across the river. Every acre is selected to the Divide, between that and the watershed of the Yarra. This is cocksfoot grown on the bad land, as it is called, grown in Noojee—[*producing a sample of grass*].—I have the authority of the surveyor, Mr. Livingstone, under Mr. Boyd, who surveyed all that land, for saying it is quite practicable to take a railway across into Neerim.

576. You heard what I read of Mr. Rolland's report?—Yes.

577. Do you agree with what he says?—Yes. He surveyed all the country, and he says it is beautiful land, and Mr. Sargent's report is a good and true report. He looked at the timber on my ground, and he said it would be a pity to destroy that timber. I am prepared, and Mr. Wilson (who has a survey on his ground) has given me his authority for saying he would give the land at whatever the Government think a fair thing, perhaps for nothing. I will give it for nothing.

578. How far does it go through yours?—The terminus of this survey comes into me about half-a-mile. I have another survey through my land by Mr. Short. If it goes through my land I will give it for nothing.

The witness withdrew.

Richard Rendell, sworn and examined.

579. *By the Chairman.*—What have you to say about this line?—This is our block "F"—[*pointing to the plan*].—This is Neerim East. There are a lot of selections not marked on the plan. The railway at present surveyed is no use to us to come here.

580. Have you a different deviation from Mr. Preston's—do you begin at the 5 miles 51 chains?—At Mr. Barr's.

581. *By Mr. Groom.*—You ask for a deviation from the present terminus at Neerim, and you want it to run to the east about a mile and a half?—Yes, about that.

582. And running again to the terminus at Neerim North?—It is a good way down, about half the distance. It is a slight deviation, so we might make use of it. The present survey we cannot make any use of. It cuts off about three-fourths of our district.

583. *By the Chairman.*—Suppose if you were in my place, having heard the evidence to-day, what would you tell Parliament?—It is rather an awkward question.

584. First of all may I ask, which do you favour—how far would you agree with the existing survey; to what point would suit everybody?—The cross-roads at South Neerim, where they are making it now, it is no use any further to us. All the district would be cut off unless we get a deviation.

585. How long would that be?—About a mile and a half.

586. What could we do in the face of what you have heard to-day?—This has nothing to do with what you have been hearing.

587. You want a kind of corkscrew?—No, we do not want a corkscrew.

588. Is the country as easy to make a railway in as where you want to get to?—The cost would be no more. We have been agitating.

589. If you are going to get your land increased in value, and the Government subsidy increased, and the people in other districts to pay for it, do you think we should send to England to borrow money now to make you the railway?—If that is not granted two-thirds of the selectors there will have to leave their homes.

590. That is merely a platitude?—No.

591. You have not shown where it can be made at a less expense?—We do not believe it is a greater expense.

592. What does that mean?—We wish to press on you to give us a survey to see about it.

593. We are not in a position to do that—we have had some points, 7 miles 71 chains, the Latrobe, and the 5 miles 51 chains, given to us?—We were trying to get a survey, and Mr. Groom knows that. It is virtually this, if we do not get a deviation it is not a rap of difference to us whether it goes any further or not. We cannot get across because the hills are so stiff.

594. Do you not think it would be a better course to have got a survey. I think I may promise for the Committee if you get a survey made, in a rough country like this, it may be you may get a deviation?—Mr. Field will give a report, but he had not the middle section.

The witness withdrew.

Charles H. Stephens, sworn and examined.

595. *By the Chairman.*—What are you?—A farmer.

596. What have you to say to the Committee on this line?—I have a piece of ground out at Neerim East, and that is the country, if you will notice, that Mr. Barr mentioned that the railway was altogether on one side of the district, and it was one mile from the good land to the railway on one side. I think it would be better if the line deviated instead of following up the road. This line crosses the main road five different times; it zig-zags about on the spur.

597. What will the people say if you do that—the people have already the Government line of survey—it has been before the public for months, and at the last moment you come in and make another proposal?—They have been speaking about it, but it was put off till the Standing Committee came to the district.

598. I am asking you, supposing this line is brought up here, is yours a better line for the country?—I believe it is. It will suit this district, Neerim East.

599. This would be on the gold-mining land?—It is taken up in small blocks of 50 and 100 acres.

600. What can the people do?—Go to Neerim, or Neerim South. If it was deviated at the bend it would suit all parties. I will ask Mr. Barr if it will interfere with the people there.

601. Are there more people that side of the line?—Yes, but the land was not selected in those days. It is about three years ago since it was selected. There are no selections on the west side of the proposed route as surveyed. I think if it was inquired into it would be found not to be a foolish idea.

The witness withdrew.

Adjourned.

(*At Warragul.*)

Frederick Henry Cooke, further examined.

602. *By the Chairman.*—What do you wish to say further to the Committee?—I was requested by Councillor Barr to attend, and give you an idea of the difference in the value of land on the east, between the east and the west side of Noojee, and to give you my idea of the reason why the line should be extended as far as the Latrobe River.

603. Is that the left-hand side?—The left-hand going westward. The line as far as at present surveyed is undoubtedly in the best position to suit the public. As a paying practical line it goes through the best country, and from the present terminus it can be carried on.

604. How far along that line—is it the 5 miles 51 chains, or the 7 miles 71 chains?—The 7 miles 71 chains. If the line is carried from the 7 miles 71 chains as far as the Latrobe River, we can get roads into the station both east and west. It will open a very valuable forest of really first-class sawing timber. The forest to which Mr. Sargeant referred is one out of three or four distinct forests. The spurs trend to that portion.

605. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—The other side of the Latrobe?—Yes, two of them. To the west is some granite country, but it is on this side of the Latrobe, the granite country.

606. That was a mistake about the granite that was mentioned to-day?—Undoubtedly.

607. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—None of those reserves are marked there on the plan?—No.

608. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—You say you will get into the granite country?—Yes—[*explaining on the plan*].

609. As a matter of fact the spurs fall into the valley?—Yes.

610. *By the Chairman.*—What do you call them?—This is the parish of Nayook.

611. It all trends towards the proposed station?—Yes; one mile and a half from the present terminus to the Latrobe River, as you would take the line. This country, Noojee, over the river, that is the western portion of Noojee I am alluding to, consists of rich chocolate soil similar to Neerim, timbered with bluegum, and mountain ash, and blackbutt.

612. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—Heavy timber?—Straight timber, not very large. It is thickly timbered, and dense hazel and musk scrub.

613. *By the Chairman.*—When the trees are very large they are not so good?—Not for sawing purposes. This is the land that Mr. Sargeant alludes to on this side as the white top country. There is the granite country where Mr. Ross's block is; it is only lying on the top of the ground—boulders.

614. Further east?—You get into good chocolate soil.

615. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—How far from the Latrobe station?—You would strike it about two miles to the westward.

616. That would be sufficiently near to develop the timber trade?—Yes.

617. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—You would require a bridge?—We have bridges now.

618. Sufficiently strong for the timber trade?—Yes. Those spurs trend from the Dividing Range down to the valley just near to Mr. Longmore's; they go into a fork. This is Mr. Cushing's block. Longmore is only minding it—[*referring to the plan*].

619. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—You heard the evidence about the eastern portion, where they want the deviation, and that this to the westward was valueless to all intents and purposes?—It is all nonsense.

620. On your oath, having a good knowledge, you say that is equal to what [we passed through at Neerim?—Yes, some of it. Two miles and a half to the west you get to good.

621. *By Mr. Groom.*—Is it level?—No, broken. The spurs are steady; they go up from the Latrobe. This is what is known as the Gap.

622. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—Within that mark—[pointing to the plan]—it is good land?—I have been across the range.

623. What is the white marked on that plan?—Open bush country. I do not know it.

624. Is it good land?—Some of it. Now I have spoken about the two forests of sawing timber, one in Nayook and one in Noojee proper.

625. *By the Chairman.*—Do you know what area Mr. Sargent referred to in his report?—I should think about 8,000 or 10,000 acres. I know the distance he went. The next forest is just exactly north of Neerim, where you were taking evidence. That consists of blackbutt timber.

626. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—That is in a line with the proposed line?—Yes, a bit of very fair country.

627. *By the Chairman.*—What rise would you have to make?—To get where?

628. Any extension?—The only way to make an extension would be to go towards Lilydale.

629. Do you know how far it is to Lilydale?—Not to Lilydale. I have been to the Gap. That is about twelve miles.

630. Where is Warburton?—Down there—[pointing to the map]—the valley of the Little Yarra to the Gap is about twelve miles.

631. And to Lilydale?—I do not know. They tell me it is about 40 miles from the Gap into Melbourne.

632. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—Suppose we got to the river, is there any difficulty in getting up the hill back again; what would be the grade?—Mr. Short would be able to tell better than I.

633. We have been told you get into a hole?—I should think it would be an easy matter to get down.

634. To get back?—It would be a grade of about 1 in 40. Of course, when we are making roads we are confined to the lines laid down by the surveyor. I had a road made down there, and we made a slight deviation; that is about 1 in 20.

635. Can you give the Committee any information as to why the land was described as being more valuable to the east?—The only land I have seen to the east of value is the red portion.

636. *By the Chairman.*—How many acres, about 20,000?—About 4,000.

637. In the blue there are about 32,000 acres?—That is all magnificent land. It cannot be brought into Neerim. The only way to get a railway there is (I own land there, and I have been hunting all over the country) to bring it out about Moe or Traralgon.

638. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—Then the extension to the Latrobe would not benefit the blue land?—No.

639. You say it would not benefit the blue at all?—I do not think so, except the people on the outskirts of it.

640. How do you account for Mr. Preston's evidence?—I do not think he knows anything about it. He has got a block of land which he has done nothing on. The last time I was up there I only saw two blocks on which anything was done. It is outside of our shire. It is in the Narracan shire.

641. Would the extension benefit the red?—It would benefit the red. The people from there can get in.

642. The western side of the blue?—Yes.

643. *By the Chairman.*—If we only went to the 5 miles 51 chains, would the red be benefited?—No.

644. Why?—I think the distance would be too far. If the railway is only carried on to the five miles it would have nothing to feed it but the rich land in Neerim proper, and it will take from five years to ten years to get that under the plough. If it is taken to the Latrobe it will be fed with timber immediately. By the time the line is made the mills will be there.

645. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—As the timber is removed, I suppose potato-growing will take its place?—Potato-growing will take its place at once. I collected the agricultural statistics for this shire for three years, and I find the return of both Buln Buln and Warragul shires has been over that of any other shire in the colony. This year it is within a fraction of a ton per acre for potatoes; it is third for hay, and third for oats. The other returns are not yet in.

646. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—Going up to the 7 miles 71 chains, if it stops what would be the effect; would the people be too far off for the timber trade?—Yes, I think so. It will stop the paling traffic which has been depended on for the district, because for that mile and a half of railway line they would have to travel about five miles. We would have to purchase the roads and it would ruin the shire, and that five miles takes away the profit.

647. You appear to press upon the Committee that the five miles and a half would make the lower line pay?—Yes.

648. How many miles of country would be benefited by the extension to the Latrobe?—About ten north, seven east, and eight west.

649. More than at any other point?—Yes, as it would more than double the timber traffic. That timber traffic you would get. It is on good country; it would become good agricultural country. There is room for at least a dozen mills on the other side of the Latrobe, say eight or nine.

650. Would they have water power?—Plenty of water for the mills. They would use steam power to work them.

651. They could put in 50 mills?—I would not go so far as that. There would be ample room for four or five, on the south side.

652. Then it would be practicable, from the amount of timber?—I have been all over the country, and I have never seen such a crop of timber in my life.

653. Are there many settlers about that upper part?—The whole country to the north and west of the Latrobe is taken up.

654. What is the area?—That of Noojee is 50,000 and some odd acres.

655. *By Mr. Woods.*—Do you know what the fall is, in the Latrobe, per mile?—I do not remember. I ought to know. I know the fall is pretty rapid. The fall, when you get to the west from Scotson's block, is 250 feet to Mr. Cushing's.

656. What is the distance?—As the crow flies, about six or seven miles, taking the average fall.

657. It is very rapid then?—In places.

658. *By the Chairman.*—Have you anything else to say. You were going to give us some values, I thought?—I can give you the values of any land in the shire, if you choose.

659. Somebody said this year that you had already taken the enhanced value, even when the survey was made?—Yes, I can answer that. That was the year after I was appointed shire valuer. When I went up to Neerim I saw the people, like Mr. Hogan, where the properties were rated at £2 to £2 10s. capital value. He spoke of an offer of £20; that offer was made through me.

660. For the lot?—For one block. He was offered by the same man £9 10s. for the four blocks. That was the day on which he appealed against the value, and the whole of it was raised to £8 17s. 6d. That was placed on it for shire purposes. No fresh valuation was put on since. He swore in the court that no land was worth £5 an acre, and I had my buyer to offer £9 10s. for the four blocks, or £20 for one block.

661. *By Mr. Woods.*—In the open court?—In the open court.

662. *By the Chairman.*—It was not in consequence of the survey?—The survey had something to do with making a Melbourne man anxious to purchase, and one or two others too. One Adelaide man bid up to £17 per acre for a block.

663. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—Your valuation was £8 17s. 6d. for the whole block?—Yes, and one block where the station site was surveyed was £12 17s.

The witness withdrew.

Thomas Short, further examined.

664. *By the Chairman.*—Where did we leave off with you to-day?—About the prices.

665. You were averse to letting the line in sections, and you gave the prices at which people in the locality would supply. Tell us why you were averse to letting the work in sections?—Supposing you let the fencing by itself, and the earthworks, bridges, and culverts, so that the fencers might take the fencing, say, and go on with it—what objection would that raise?—It means you would have so many people to deal with; instead of one contractor, you would possibly have a dozen to deal with.

666. Are they allowed to sublet now?—No; but they do sublet. They are not allowed by the specification, but they do.

667. Have we not engineers in the department who would be able to take this line and prepare a specification instead of having the works all in one field. He would be better able to prepare a specification than they could in Melbourne. Could he not make these specifications?—I think not. It is more in the nature of a legal document.

668. Suppose you say—“Tenders will be taken for providing eleven miles of fencing on each side of the line”?—That could be done, but instead of having a contractor for the whole line, you would have five or six, and they would possibly not complete it in their specified time.

669. Why?—You find in big contracts they are very often behind with the bridges or the culverts.

670. We are told the delays are because the department do not supply the plans. Why could not a local man in the district do it as well as a man who does not know the country?—I do not say “as well.”

671. The only objection you have is to the difficulty of the legal phraseology there is to deal with?—A man who had the matter in hand might run the department into law suits for non-fulfilment of agreements.

672. Could we not have a business department to do it, and you could supply the rails and crossings?—Yes.

673. What do you think would be a fair estimate for the engineering on that line we are talking of?—The extension or the whole?

674. Take the proposed line to the Latrobe, some ten or eleven miles, what would be a fair rate per mile to prepare specifications, call for tenders, and superintend the work—how much a mile?—If it were based on contract time of twelve months, it would take about £2,000 to £2,500. The engineering contract could be let for that money if you limit the time to twelve months. If you made it two years it would be a greater proportion.

675. I want you, as a professional man, to tell us a fair time to give?—Twelve months.

676. Taking that as a fair time, and knowing the character of the country, how much would you say?—£2,000 to £2,500.

677. That would be, say, £250 a mile?—Yes.

678. Including inspectors?—Yes.

679. How many engineers and inspectors?—An engineer and an assistant and two inspectors of works, and, when the permanent way started, only one inspector of works and one of permanent way.

680. Why have we more than that now?—I do not know that we have.

681. We have evidence that on the line from Beechworth to Yackandandah we had three engineers and four inspectors?—The last line I had was 22 miles, and we had three inspectors and an assistant draughtsman. That was the Fitzroy to Whittlesea line.

682. Rather a heavy line?—£97,000 was the contract price, but it was finished for £10,000 less.

683. What would you allow for water on that line we are talking about?—The supply of the engines?

684. Yes, water supply. Knowing the Latrobe and the track all along from Warragul, what would you allow?—I would not like to give an estimate without running over it.

685. Is there enough water at Warragul to run the engine to the place and back—what is the distance?—About twenty miles. There is plenty of water at Tarreago.

686. Would you think £2,000 too much?—I do not know.

687. What sleepers could you get?—Stringybark, messmate, and bluegum—only second-class quality of timber.

688. Would you specify local timber on that line?—Yes.

689. What do the department do?—They specify both timbers.

690. What would be the figure?—They guarantee to supply at 3s. a sleeper.

691. *By Mr. Woods.*—What timber?—Bluegum, messmate, or stringybark.

692. *By the Chairman.*—Do you know the difference in the life between a redgum sleeper and the others?—It is generally supposed redgum lasts fifteen years.

693. And the others?—Ten to twelve years. I suppose under certain circumstances the timbers vary on account of climatic influences.

694. And the character of the land on which it grows?—Yes; grown in a wet country it does not stand so long.

695. Is there anything you can suggest, as you know everything about Victorian railways, about this railway—about a different line of railway at a less cost than we have been paying?—I have been over all the Victorian lines, and, in fact, all the Australian railways except in Western Australia. I have lately come from New Zealand, where I visited every line, and where the Fell principle is used with the horizontal wheel—that is between Wellington and Napier, on a grade of 1 in 12, four miles and a half in length.

696. *By Mr. Woods.*—Unbroken?—Yes. There they seem to pay very little attention to drainage, because they do not go in for the expensive kind of culverts we do, and they make them every half-mile. They do not go into getting mitre drains and side-cuttings. Another saving is they do not fence.

697. Are they boxed drains?—Made of local timber.

698. An open box drain?—Yes.

699. Sawn timber?—Yes, sawn or hewn. They do not go to the expense of fences in the country districts.

700. *By the Chairman.*—Say in a country like we were through to-day?—Without fences, without American pits, or crossings to roads.

701. *By Mr. Woods.*—Cattle-pits?—Yes.

702. *By the Chairman.*—No gate-houses?—No. The pits do away with the gate-houses. They run on with a 3ft. 6in. gauge; we have the 5ft. 3in. gauge. The bridges on this line might be made of the local timber. The bluegum would be good enough for beams, and messmate would do, or stringybark, or bluegum. The silvertop ironbark is not suitable for piles, as the white ant attacks it.

703. Is there anything else that could be done to lighten the expense?—I think the batters of the cuttings might be lessened from 1 to 1 to $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1.

704. *By Mr. Woods.*—Would this formation stand that?—Yes, except perhaps the first 3 feet there would have to be a bench, but after that you could run it $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1. The rate of speed in New Zealand is not at the rate that they run here. They run at from twelve to fifteen miles an hour, as near as I could calculate.

705. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—On the main lines?—All except the express trains; they run at eighteen to twenty miles an hour.

706. That is in consequence of the heavy grades?—I think so, and they do not use 8 inches of ballast. They use 4 to 5 inches.

707. *By Mr. Woods.*—Under the sleepers?—Yes, 4 inches under the sleepers.

708. The same class of ballast as we have?—Gravel.

709. River gravel?—Yes, either in the river or the hills. Sometimes they strike it in the cuttings.

710. *By the Chairman.*—We will run down the estimate and see what you would strike out?—I would not like to interfere with the Government estimate.

711. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—Having seen those lines in New Zealand, what do you think would be the difference between constructing a mile here and constructing a mile there in similar country?—They go in for rougher country. In ordinary country, the same as Victorian, I should reckon about 33 per cent., possibly more than that.

712. The saving by that economical system would be about 33 per cent., taking our grades and different construction?—Yes, if we met equal country.

713. One-third?—Possibly more, or possibly a little less.

714. *By the Chairman.*—Do you know what width of land the Railway Department takes to make our railways?—Various widths. I have seen as low as 40 links on one side, less than 30 feet, up to 3 chains for station grounds.

715. Can you tell us any line where it is 40 links?—Forty links on one side.

716. What was the other?—Possibly a chain.

717. What would you think wide enough to take the line which we speak of?—I think about 75 links each side, or perhaps 60 links each side with a single line.

718. Why would you want it?—On account of cuttings. If you had a 1 to 1 batter it would run then bigger than a $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1.

719. What saving would you effect if you made the batter less?—The quantity of earthwork would be materially decreased.

720. What proportions would it be in?—I could not say without going into figures.

721. *By Mr. Woods.*—Varying according to the height of the embankment?—Yes.

722. *By the Chairman.*—What is the ordinary width?—With 1 to 1 in the Seymour line it is 37ft. 6in.

723. Instead of what?—Instead of 46 feet.

724. That is about 7 feet?—Yes, and every hill and cutting they were saving their work.

725. *By Mr. Woods.*—In reference to a country where timber is plentiful, and ballast rather scarce, if anything, I think I understood you to say this morning you would have a lighter class of railway and lighter rolling-stock?—Yes.

726. Suppose that in having a lighter class of railway and lighter rolling-stock, and to make the railway so that any rolling-stock on the Victorian lines would be interchangeable, do you think it could be done in this way. You have about 2,000 sleepers to the mile?—One thousand eight hundred and forty.

727. Supposing you put 500 more sleepers in the mile, what weight of rail then would you require. Would you require a 60-lb. rail, with the ordinary spacing apart of sleepers?—About 52-lb. or 53-lb. rails.

728. Say 55-lb.?—Yes; instead of 66-lb. or 60-lb., as they use now.

729. Would that be equal to carrying anything at fifteen miles an hour with a Government engine or rolling-stock?—Yes.

730. What would be the difference in cost of a line, the earthworks being all equal, with 500 more sleepers per mile, and a proportionate reduction in boxing ballast?—That would be a vast difference. It would depend upon where you could get the ballast. If you got gravel near at hand, it can be put on at about a third of the price of bluestone.

731. What does it cost?—I think about 8s. a yard. If you struck it in any cutting, it would decrease the expense by about 40 per cent. in the cost of ballast; so that you could erect your crushers and run it with your trucks.

732. I will suppose you get your ballast on the line. Assuming you get all you want on the line, what would it cost for the ballast on the line with a bit of siding. There would be the quarrying and lifting to the machines, and crushing in the machines, and distributing. What would it cost, providing it came out of the cuttings, handy to the lines. I would simply say handy to the line, within a quarter of mile?—Will I allow for royalty?
733. No royalty?—It could be put on for 4s. 6d. to 4s. 9d. a cubic yard.
734. What ballast do you put under sleepers—6 inches of 2½-in. ballast?—Yes.
735. Your estimate is 4s. 9d.?—Yes.
736. Can you give the number of cube yards in a mile at 6 inches, single formation?—One thousand two hundred and eighty-six cube yards; that is at 8 inches.
737. At what cost at 4s. 9d.?—£305 9s.
738. That is £305 9s. for ballast below the sleepers?—No; boxed up.
739. What width have you taken?—Ten feet six inches; that is the width as used now.
740. For the ballast?—Eleven feet on the bottom and 10 on the top.
741. In that mile we will take the sleepers. I am told that sleepers were supplied from here to Murray Ross's line, from Oakleigh to the Brighton line for 2s. Under those circumstances could we not decently take 2s. 6d. for the sleepers along the line?—They might possibly be supplied at 2s. 6d., but the guarantee I have is to do it at 3s.
742. Do you think we should be safe in taking them at 2s. 6d.?—Split the difference, and say 2s. 9d.
743. I think we might say 2s. 6d.?—Yes.
744. How many feet is that in the gravel; those sleepers are 9 inches by 4½ inches?—Yes, about 2½ cubic feet.
745. Cubic?—Yes.
746. Suppose you have 500 more sleepers to the mile, will you take that quantity out of the ballast?—I did.
747. You have the whole of the line with 500 more sleepers and the ballasting, £305 9s. per mile?—Yes.
748. What are the sleepers per mile at half-a-crown?—£230.
749. What is the total, sleepers and ballast, compared with the cost of the present system?—The estimate would be £597 a mile.
750. What is the other estimate?—What would you estimate the ballast at?
751. The same prices, by the old system?—The difference would be £16 5s. 9d.
752. In favour of which?—In favour of the alteration, the putting 500 sleepers more.
753. That is £16 5s. 9d. less?—Yes.
754. Hitherto a 60-lb. rail has been used; is it your opinion that a 55-lb. rail would answer the purpose as well as a 60-lb. rail, with the additional number of sleepers?—I do not know if 500 would be enough. It could be calculated; it would be a proportion; the proportion would increase in ratio to the span.
755. It might run into 600 sleepers a mile?—Yes.
756. That would be nearly a third more?—Yes.
757. What is the difference between the 50-lb. rail and the 60-lb. rail?—Just the weight in iron.
758. That is 10 lbs. per yard?—Yes; that would be for a mile 35,200 lbs.
759. *The Chairman*.—That would be £68 a mile; that is for one line.
760. *By Mr. Woods*.—Sixty pounds to the yard running?—Ten pounds a yard less.
761. Twenty pounds on the two rails per yard in a mile, what would that be?—Roughly, about 16 tons per mile.
762. Take that at £6 per ton?—Yes. That is £96.
763. Suppose you throw off the £16 5s. 9d., and say we will put extra sleepers to make it a third, then you have got to £96 a mile saved in the weight of iron?—Yes.
764. Do you think a line so constructed would take any of the Government rolling-stock at fifteen miles an hour?—Yes.
765. Do you think we have forgotten anything; the platelaying would be just the same?—Yes; the handling would be lighter.
766. Do you think, under any circumstances, that it would be better to construct a line like that so that the Government rolling-stock could interchange wherever found necessary without any protest on the part of the Government that the line was not fit to carry their stock?—Yes.
767. You think it would be equal to carrying their stock, assuming that not more than fifteen miles an hour was required?—Yes.
768. Now we will go to culverts. Will you describe the culvert and the cost of the culvert per lineal foot as at present specified?—About 12s. 9d. a lineal foot, 3ft. 9in. by 1ft. 6in.
769. That is about as cheap a culvert as you can put in?—Yes.
770. Are you putting them in here?—Yes, except in bad cases of drainage on your outbreak, then you cannot.
771. In ordinary country you use the sleepers?—Yes.
772. At a cost of 12s. 9d. a foot?—Yes. The old system used to be log culverts; now they are made out of sawn stuff.
773. Take the viaducts and bridges, what do you say per foot for timber, the average height?—Say 26 feet high; that would be about £8 per lineal foot. The piles would have to be extra long and the beams 12 inches by 9 inches; or 14 inches by 10 inches, spaced 6 feet apart. The Parwan Viaduct, which I built, cost £9 a foot. That is about 38 feet in the deepest part.
774. Do not you think 25 feet is over the average height of your viaducts?—Yes, it might be in the country lines. The gullies are generally pretty steep.
775. But where steep, rather short?—Yes, greater depth and materials harder to get.
776. Do you know timber in the district that you could get?—Yes; bluegum, messmate, ironbark, stringybark. The white ironbark is good timber, but the white ants attack it. I have seen it eaten away, and it is not a safe timber to use in piles. The danger of bluegum is, you have to put a ring for fear of a split.

777. In all of them?—In hard ground. In the soft ground they drive easily. You shoe them in hard ground.

778. Are the shoes wrought or cast?—Wrought and cast.

779. *By Mr. McIntyre.*—I have heard it stated there would be a great difficulty when we get down to the Latrobe River, that it would be hard to get the line up—would that be so?—It is not so steep, it is 1 in 40·282.

780. There is nothing in the way of difficulty then?—I did not meet with any in my travels.

781. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—What lines have you been engaged on?—I was assistant to Peyton Jones on the Coburg line, and at this time he had the Castlemaine and Maldon line, Benalla and St. James line, Wodonga and Murray line, in all of which I have been in some way connected. I have been engineer-in-charge of the Ballarat Cattle Yards line, Lal Lal Racecourse line, Newport to Bacchus Marsh Junction line.

782. *By Mr. Woods.*—Does that include the viaduct?—I was only on the branch.

783. You had nothing to do with that?—Yes, I made it up finally against John Buchanan. I was also on the Gordons to Ballan line for a short period; Wandong to Kilmore line for a short period; Alphington to Heidelberg line; Coburg to Somerton line; and the Fitzroy to Whittlesea line.

784. In what capacity?—As resident engineer on nearly all those lines.

785. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—Your experience has been of the widest?—For a young man.

786. Which of those lines was the cheapest in construction?—Bacchus Marsh Junction to Newport.

787. What was the cost per mile?—About £3,500 per mile.

788. *By Mr. Woods.*—What were the gradients?—One in 44. That is the piece from the Newport sheds to Braybrook.

789. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—Which was the next to that?—I think the Ballarat Cattle Yards.

790. What was that line?—It was only two miles and a half, and I think it cost £10,000.

791. The lot?—Yes.

792. Including everything?—Only construction. I had nothing to do with the lands and station buildings.

793. You would see in the papers that the charge is made against the Railway Department that we are too extravagant in poor newly-settled country in the construction of our railways—now that you have seen the railways in New Zealand, from your wide experience could you suggest any improvement to the Committee in such countries as we are now entering on. For instance, could you suggest anything that would do for fifteen years, say, to reduce the cost considerably and probably meet all the requirements of the district for the next ten or fifteen years?—I am afraid you are going too far for me. As other officers have given evidence, I think you might let me off that question.

794. It is rather a difficult thing to let you off that question, seeing that you have admitted your large experience, and seeing that the country should have the advantage of the best advice of its best servants. It is the point which the Committee wish most to avail themselves of?—As long as it does not appear in the evidence I do not mind.

795. This the Committee will have to get, and I apprehend it will have to get it from you and a dozen others. What must we do to correct this which is now admitted to be the general defect in the Victorian system. I now put the questions to you (not to hurt you, for I will ask the Chairman to make a note that it is too bad that there should be any suspicion attached to you), for I am inclined to think that I see in the distance that it is of possible advantage to you; but, in addition to that, I think the Committee will have to ask you to answer that question?—I understand the Committee are asking me now for the information; I am not giving it to private individuals.

796. *The Chairman.*—As put by Mr. Melville, it would be compulsory for you to answer.

797. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—As it is getting rather late I might defer your further examination?—I would suggest that a board of three engineers, or an engineer, a surveyor, and a valuator should be appointed to act under a sub-committee to visit the different routes and report any decrease they could possibly see in making light lines.

798. In the meantime, in an off-hand way, it seems necessary to get a general answer?—[*No answer.*]

799. *By the Chairman.*—What should the board be called?—I should call them a board of experts.

800. By that means you think you could reduce the cost?—Yes.

801. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—My question is, how. With your large experience on the Victorian lines, and with the advantage you have had of seeing the lines in New Zealand, could you make any suggestions to us that would help us in the country we are now engaged in—anything that would make a decrease in the cost of making a line good enough to serve this district for ten or fifteen years, running once, twice, or three times a week, at a speed of ten or fifteen miles an hour. I do not see how it can injure you in any way. That has never been before the Victorian engineers?—The first decrease I would make would be that I would make arrangements with our land-owners or our landed proprietors to fence their land if necessary, and, if not, to leave the land unfenced in country districts, and where it should be fenced they should fence and keep the fence in repair, the same as you have to give accommodation gates. I think the same arrangement would hold good as regards fencing; that would be the first thing. The next thing would be the use of second-class timber for bridge works and culverts. A saving would be effected by the variations in the batter, which, of course, we call the grade of the siding.

802. *By Mr. Woods.*—You are calculating that all your embankments lie at their natural batter?—Yes. The embankments have to be made out of the cuttings. The banks I should make as wide as the earth would go out of the cuttings. I should cut my coat according to my cloth. I should suggest that light ballast where practicable be used. Instead of 6 inches under the sleepers I would have 3 or 4 inches, and boxed up to 2½ inches, which will hold the sleeper and rail very firm, except for sand banks. The sand does not get such a hold as the bluestone. The edges of the bluestone resist to a great extent the spreading of the sleepers. The departure to a lighter rail would require mature consideration. I think that in most cases timber bridges where obtainable might be used. In the larger viaducts about Melbourne you cannot use timber; they look unsightly.

803. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—Can you sum that up, what the result in this particular work of yours would be in the cost of lines in a country like this. What would that give for a line, excluding the land, the land valuations, and the compensations?—£3,000 to £4,000 a mile.

804. In country like this?—Yes.

805. *By the Chairman.*—Does that include the rails?—No; they are always supplied from Home, and we never know what that would be.

806. *By the Hon. D. Melville.*—Would you think this country with heavy cuttings the worst class of country you would have to encounter?—The most expensive to make and to maintain, because the water has such an effect on the roads and bridges and cuttings.

807. What would be the effect in the level country, which would cost £3,000 a mile; what would the effect of your system be there?—It would be to still further reduce.

808. In your experience have you found, in New Zealand or anywhere else, the use of the ordinary highway for railways to be effectual?—I did not see any of it in New Zealand. I saw it in Adelaide. It was simply with the suburban lines, simply in the town lines, four or five miles. I did not see any in the country.

809. Did it occur to you that it was a serious matter in effect in the suburban lines?—I looked upon it that a cable tram would have made the place look better. It struck me that a cable tram looked more sightly in a street than a locomotive.

810. In our new lines, taken generally, do you think this Committee, by attention to those matters, could save 25 to 50 per cent. in the cost of construction?—I should say about 25 to 30 per cent., perhaps as high as 33 per cent.; that would be one-third.

811. And the railways be fairly useful?—Yes. They would not be able to run at the present speed, and you would not have the facilities for main line districts, like the off-shoots. I am always of opinion that for main lines the people should be carried as quickly as possible between the terminal points.

812. Will you tell us for what kind of line you estimate from the 7 miles 71 chains up to the Latrobe. Is it a fairly substantial line?—Yes. A good line, under the present circumstances.

813. Including station accommodation?—The cost of the station would be just the same. The terminus would be altered. That is the difference.

814. Which is the best for the country—for the State to continue the line to the Latrobe or to stop at the 7 miles 71 chains?—To get down as near the bed of the river as possible.

815. It would be best for the country to go on, and would pay the best?—Yes. If the line is to pay at all, that is the only means I see.

816. *By the Chairman.*—What would be the duties of the three gentlemen comprising the board that you have spoken about?—First of all to ascertain the quality of the country where the line runs—whether for sheep, or cattle, or agricultural purposes; virtually, whether pastoral or agricultural districts.

817. With a view to obtain the land at a less cost?—That is one object; and also to know whether a fence is requisite, because a sheep would not throw a train off the line, whereas a bullock might, and cause considerable damage to rolling-stock, and put the Government to expense for injuries.

818. Are the lines run in New Zealand without a fence by night?—Night and day.

819. What are the other duties of the board?—Inspect the timber, and bring samples of it, having them cut from the best samples they could obtain, for bridges, culverts, sleepers, viaducts. I would have round corner-posts and rough gate-posts, instead of ordinary dressed posts we now use. I think a round post would be good enough for bush wear and tear. They would also ascertain if ballast could be got handy, which is a most vital point on a railway. The ballast has always been undecided. There is never sufficient information given to contractors as to where ballast could be got, and they often tender in the dark. I would have those people to say where the best ballast can be got—gravel, bluestone, sand, or river ballast; or whether there was any to be obtained in the district; and then they could, in their opinion, recommend which ballast could be used, and which would cost the least. The same principle would apply to the timber. They would get the cheapest, always laying it down distinctly that it should be suitable timber. Also, they would find out the rainfall, and the climatic influences, and they might be able to tell whether a light line would be the most useful, or a heavy line, and whether less trouble or more. They might also gather information of guarantees, which I think would materially assist the Standing Committee, as to the price at which land could be guaranteed; or whether the occupants were in favour of giving the land or building railways on the betterment system or principle. Another thing would be to inspect the grades particularly and carefully, to see that no unnecessary wear and tear should occur in a line, which, of course, always occurs with extreme grades. The lighter the grade, the less wear and tear, in my opinion, on a line.

820. *By Mr. Woods.*—That also applies to curves?—Yes; and put in less curves, and keep the line as straight as possible. In the country you cannot put down a straight line. You must go where you can get a grade and the best route. Those would be points to assist in effecting a saving, or bringing about the best possible resources in connexion with railways. There would be also the cattle-pits, which are undecided in Victoria. In New Zealand they use cattle-pits, and, as Mr. McKerrow told me, they work exceedingly well. I was collecting information, and when I went there I went on a professional tour for information. Of course, their timbers in New Zealand are fit for any class of work; in fact, are superior, except in one or two cases, to all of ours. Those points, I think, are about all I can mention.

821. *By the Chairman.*—We will see what we can knock off the railway. First of all, I understand in the line we speak of you would have no fencing?—No.

822. Consequently there would be a saving of the whole of that?—Of course in agricultural districts you would have to have fences.

823. I am speaking of the Neerim line. Knowing the country, would you dispense with the fencing?—Yes.

824. There is a saving of £2,145 for fencing to begin with. You could dispense with the level crossings?—Yes.

825. And there is a saving of £3,372 for gate-houses and level crossings?—Yes.

826. And what for earthworks?—I could not say without going into figures.

827. You say there would be a considerable reduction?—I should say, approximately, about a fifth or a sixth.

828. Would you metal the roads to the station grounds?—Only the portion across the rails.

829. I suppose you know that thousands of pounds are spent in making roads outside the grounds?—The roads are principally metalled owing to the councils' interference. I know in some cases I did not put metal, and the councils made a noise about it.

830. Would you be surprised to know that the metalling of the roads comes to nearly £3,000?—I think you would have to metal somewhere, where the traffic is standing at the road.

831. For outside the fence?—No; I would not recommend outside the fences. I think there is one thing you omitted—I think you omitted to fence some parts of the station grounds to keep the cattle out from produce. That is one item we must not overlook.

832. I suppose an ordinary station would do for a line like this?—I think a guard to give the tickets or a porter would be enough.

833. Why are the goods put on the other side from the passengers?—It is generally considered to work better for the goods to be on one side and the passengers on the other, because if you have the two on the one side it is not at all desirable. I do not know that there is an objection to having the goods-sheds on either side.

834. In the line you speak of, what do you provide for telegraph and signals?—Nothing at all.

835. Why?—My estimate was £3,000 to £3,500. According to the present principle as we now construct there would be literally no signals; there would be one semaphore.

836. You do not provide for water?—No; I think it could be got at a very small cost. Mr. Cushing has water at his station. I do not know what it cost.

837. *Mr. Cushing.*—About £40.

838. *The Witness.*—You could not do that for engines.

839. *By the Chairman.*—Did you learn anything in South Australia at all?—The stations were not so elaborately fenced. I do not think they have the traffic we have here.

840. I suppose you agree about the fencing—the prices we heard?—I will guarantee to say those fences would be done. I have a guarantee from McDonald.

841. I understand there is a reduction; have you it in your mind—do you think that 13s. 6d. would do it?—In very wet country the banks would scour a great deal; here the embankments are made out of the cuttings.

842. Supposing your embankments were not more than 13ft. 6in., do you think a narrow width would do?—Yes.

843. As occasion arises, from the peculiarity of the country, you would make a difference?—Yes. The Expert Board would report that.

844. *By the Hon. J. Buchanan.*—Do you think that this scouring could be saved in the rich land by sowing a little grass on the banks?—There is a slight objection to that. In the summer it is liable to catch fire. In the summer time we always cut the grass within the fences, or the department would be liable for compensation for damage done by fire.

845. Is it much easier to cut good grass than it is to cut Scotch thistles?—I could not say; I have had no experience.

The witness withdrew.

Frederick H. Cooke, further examined.

846. *By the Chairman.*—You did not tell us what we could obtain the land along the proposed line from Neerim South for, from where they are constructing the line up to the Latrobe; take the average for the ten miles; take 15 acres for a mile, including stations, say about 150 acres?—I would have to take it in sections. The land varies so much in value in Neerim. From Neerim South to Mr. English's the land should be obtained on an average of £10 per acre. That is not taking into consideration the betterment system.

847. We are taking the present system, if this line were ordered at once?—From there on to the Latrobe the value would be about £7 per acre; but I am authorized to state that the holders are willing to give their land, with the exception of Mr. English.

848. The whole length?—The whole length, not including any station situations, simply what the line goes over.

849. *By Mr. Tucker.*—What is the population of the Buln Buln shire?—I have it: at Neerim proper, that is 400, taking north of Neerim South where the line is at present constructed; beyond that it is 137.

850. Is that the total population served by the line?—That is the total in our own shire served by the line. There are probably 200 or 300 outside.

851. Do you know the departmental report said 2,000 would be served by the line?—I do not know that. There is a large population served just north of Warragul. There is a dense population there.

852. Where do you commence to count?—I commence to count within about a mile and a half of the present contract.

853. How near do you come to Warragul?—I do not come this way; I go north. There is one thing I would like to point out in connexion with this line; there is not the slightest doubt it would not only be a payable line, but it will give employment to a large army of labourers for the next 30 years, with a national profit. I will add too, that that is not said in the spirit of prophesy, but it is borne out by statistics.

854. *By the Chairman.*—What does the stone cost which we saw on the road to-day?—Four shillings and sixpence.

855. Listen to this—*[reading]*—“There is an outcrop of good bluestone on the road a few chains south of the main road in Coe and Lacey's selection abreast of 14 miles 30 chains, and extending east and west from the outcrop for a considerable distance. Near the township there are numerous bluestone boulders and masses of granite on the surface, but there does not seem to be any large mass of stone; wells having been sunk 50 feet close to where the stones are visible without meeting with a bed of basalt?”—That is near the township of Neerim South.

856. “About 6 chains west of 21 miles 10 chains there are good indications of stone.” Where is that?—In Mr. Wilson's.

857. “At 4½ feet from the surface, in a shaft in which I had sunk, rock was encountered which had every appearance of being the top of a bluestone reef?”—We have had that tried to the depth of 7 feet. There is every appearance of a permanent quarry.

858. You think 4s. 6d. would be a fair price to charge instead of 7s. 6d.?—Yes.

The witness withdrew.

Adjourned.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

STATISTICS OF PROPOSED RAILWAY FROM NEERIM SOUTH TO NEERIM NORTH
From Census Returns of 1891.

Population	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	356
Live Stock—									
Horses	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	492
Milch Cows	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	651
Other Cattle	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2,425
Sheep	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	5,144
Pigs	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	490
Acres occupied	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	23,523

From Agricultural Statistics of 1891.

Number of Cultivated Farms	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	52
Cultivation.									
Wheat	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Nil. bushels
Oats	...	...	...	9	...	...	...	...	375 "
Other Cereals	...	...	...	14	...	...	...	...	480 "
Root Crops	...	...	...	132	...	...	...	...	979 tons
Hay	...	...	...	181	...	...	...	...	481 "
Other Tillage	...	...	...	7,821	...	...	...	...
Total	...	...	...	8,157	...	...	...	...

Estimated Value of—									
Rateable Property—Total Value	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	£68,100
" " Annual Value	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	£3,405
Improvements on Farms	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	£23,909
Farming Machinery and Plant	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	£2,670

Office of the Government Statist,
Melbourne, 8th August, 1891.

H. H. HAYTER,
Government Statist

APPENDIX B.

COUNTY OF BULN BULN.

E. 73637.

PARLIAMENTARY RAILWAYS COMMITTEE.

Return *re* Areas colored blue and brown within pink margin on attached plan.

						Acres.
1. Unoccupied land, including areas temporarily withheld for timber purposes	...	...	...	...	...	30,000
2. Alienated land, including licensed and leased holdings under the <i>Land Act</i> 1869	...	...	...	...	...	25,000
3. Areas leased under Section 32 <i>Land Act</i> 1884	...	...	...	...	...	63,000
4. Timber reserves	...	...	...	...	...	9,000
5. Area likely to revert to the Crown when <i>Land Act</i> 1884 expires	...	...	...	...	...	30,000

APPENDIX C.

To the Chairman and Gentlemen of the Railways Standing Committee.

I have been requested by my fellow selectors of Neerim East to draw your attention to the extension of the railway between South Neerim and Neerim.

When the present survey was made, which is on one side of the district, many of us had not our selections.

We therefore respectfully ask for a deviation to the eastward, "as shown on the accompanying plan marked red," to enable us to make use of it when built, otherwise the whole of East Neerim, on account of the nature of the country, will be compelled for all time to go to the South Neerim Station, a distance of from 6 to 10 miles *over very bad roads*. "Present and proposed roads marked blue."

The deviation asked for would shorten the distance about two-thirds.

If a survey could be taken it would prove conclusively what it is, for we believe the distance and cost would be no more, and the benefit to a large number of selectors incalculable, as you will observe the selections are very small generally.

We would also ask that you will be pleased to cause the fullest investigation to be made into the matter, and we are prepared to assist any gentlemen you may be pleased to send to ascertain the nature and capabilities of the district, or to appear before your Committee to lay our case more fully before you, whichever in your wisdom you may consider best.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your humble servant,

RICHARD RENDELL, for the district.

To the Standing Committee of Railways.

GENTLEMEN,

Warragul, 13th May, 1891.

As we had such a poor opportunity of putting our case before you at Neerim, kindly allow me to draw your attention to the following:—

That if the railway line is constructed as at present surveyed a large proportion of East Neerim will be paralyzed for many years, and at its best only an outlying district.

In fact, as far as we are concerned we shall not be benefited by any extension above South Neerim unless the deviation is made, consequently the revenue to the railway will be very small.

You will please notice that both the deviations asked for are to the east, and Mr. Barr stated that the good land was one mile to the west, and four or five to the eastward, all the evidence showing that the present survey is on one side, and will only benefit the few.

We are very anxious, therefore, to place those facts before you, and respectfully ask that some disinterested person should visit and spend a few days in the district, making himself thoroughly acquainted with it, by going through and across, and not merely on one side; you will then get an accurate statement where the railway should go.

My previous note to you, with the plan of the district, in Mr. Watson's care, will show our present and proposed roads. As there has been no survey, I cannot say anything more than I have previously done.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

RICHARD RENDELL.

APPENDIX D.

Wm. Dowey, Esq., Secretary Neerim Railway League.

DEAR SIR,

11th Feby., 1891.

In accordance with your request, I visited Neerim North for the purposes of inspecting the forests in that locality, with the view of estimating their value for saw-milling purposes. I found the forests up the Latrobe River very fine and of great extent, and well suited for sawing and other purposes, and have arrived at the opinion that with railway communication it will become the seat of the timber trade for many years. I estimate that the area traversed would supply at least five saw-mills for from fifteen to twenty years with continuous work. Allowing that each mill turned out 5,000 feet per day, which is a moderate average, the output from the five mills would represent 25,000 feet super., or about 70 tons per day. Assuming that the line of railway will be about twenty miles from Warragul, the amount earned would be about £1,725, counting 50 weeks in the year. Of course, the existence of saw-mills means a large amount of incoming freight, and the employment at least of 100 men. There would also be a very large trade in palings and other split timber.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

C. SERGEANT.