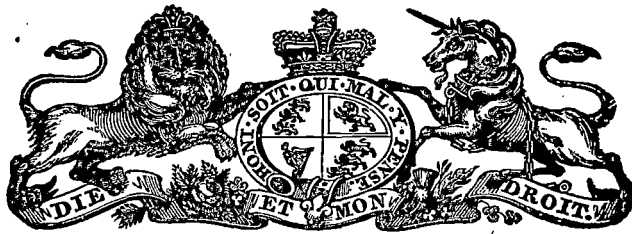


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1875.

SESSION II.

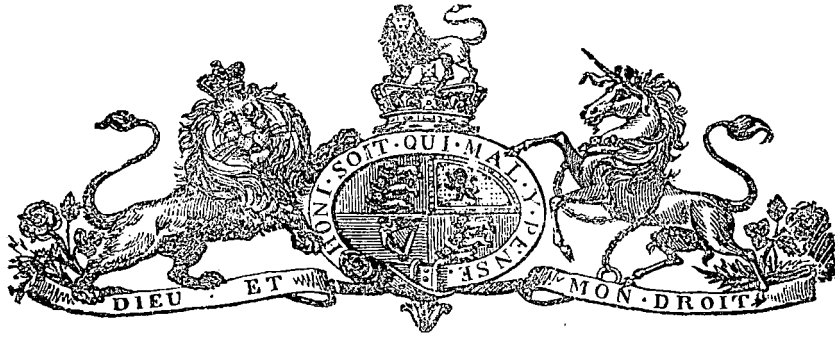
T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

NARROW GAUGE:

PETITION FROM NORTHERN DISTRICTS AGAINST ADOPTION
FOR MERSEY AND DELORAINÉ RAILWAY.

Presented by Mr. Aikenhead, October 28; and ordered by the Council to be
printed, October 29, 1875.



To the Honorable the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the undersigned Land and Householders and other Residents in the Northern Districts of Tasmania.

HUMBLY SHOWETH :

THAT a proposal is now before Parliament for the construction of a Railway from Deloraine to the River Mersey, the survey and estimate for which are based on a narrow gauge of three feet six inches, whilst the line from Launceston to Deloraine is five feet three inches.

That this break of gauge will render necessary the transshipment in both directions of all passengers, goods, parcels, timber, &c. at Deloraine,—involving great inconvenience, loss of time, and expense.

That the adoption of the narrow gauge on this short section of thirty miles will materially increase the working expenses, and reduce the speed at which trains can travel.

That one of the principal reasons alleged for constructing this Railway is to develop the vast beds of valuable timber and other heavy natural productions of the Coast Districts, including coals; and that this can be done only by carrying them at the lowest possible rates. The fact of a second handling being required at Deloraine will, in most cases, entirely shut such traffic out from the markets of Launceston, Hobart Town, and intermediate stations.

That, while the proposed Railway on the gauge of the Launceston and Western Line would undoubtedly, to a small extent, increase the first outlay, there is reason for believing that the saving in the working expenses would more than compensate for such additional cost within three or four years, as will appear from the following considerations.

The principal items of increased expenditure in the first instance would be for the extra width of cuttings and embankments. The gradients might remain the same, as we understand that one in seventy is the most severe. The rails might be sixty pounds to the yard instead of seventy-two pounds, as upon the Launceston and Western Line. The increased cost of the sleepers would be very trifling. The whole of the present rolling stock could be utilised through to Latrobe; and there would be no immediate necessity for carrying the line beyond.

On the other hand, the additional rolling stock that would be required to augment that at present at the command of the Railway Department would certainly not exceed one half the cost of an entirely independent stock. Another very important question for consideration is that of repairs. At the present time there is in connection with the Launceston and Western Line a magnificent machine shop, with a thoroughly efficient staff of operatives. This, with perhaps a light addition, would be fully capable of undertaking the supervision and repair of the whole of the rolling stock employed,—provided the Mersey extension were simply a continuation of the present Railway. The speed upon this section might be reduced to, say, sixteen miles an hour; and a couple of light tender engines similar to that last imported for the Launceston and Western Line would be sufficient for some time to come. Should, however, a narrow gauge be adopted, it will be necessary to have separate workshops and machinery, with a staff of mechanics, at either Deloraine or Latrobe, to execute the repairs constantly required to the locomotives and other rolling stock; and thus a most costly item will be added to the annual working expenses.

The difficulties attending the transshipment of low class and bulky goods can hardly be exaggerated; and, when they occur on a line so short as the one in question, can scarcely fail to defeat the object contemplated, namely, the encouragement of that particular description of traffic. We believe that, if the proposed extension to deep water were for the present abandoned, the amount already set down for expenditure on the line (£105,000) would be ample for every purpose. By this means the important Districts traversed by the Railway would be brought into direct communication with Launceston, Hobart Town, and all the intermediate Districts; and, by way of Launceston by steamers, with Victoria. Your Memorialists would also point out that any traffic between the Mersey section and the Midland Districts or Hobart Town would, by the adoption of the course they have indicated, require only one transshipment at the Evandale junction; whereas, if the narrow gauge is adopted, two transshipments will be inevitable at Evandale and Deloraine.

For these and other reasons we pray that your Honorable Council will not sanction the narrow gauge in the construction of the Railway in question; and your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[Here follow 141 Signatures.]

JAMES BARNARD,
GOVERNMENT PRINTER, TASMANIA.