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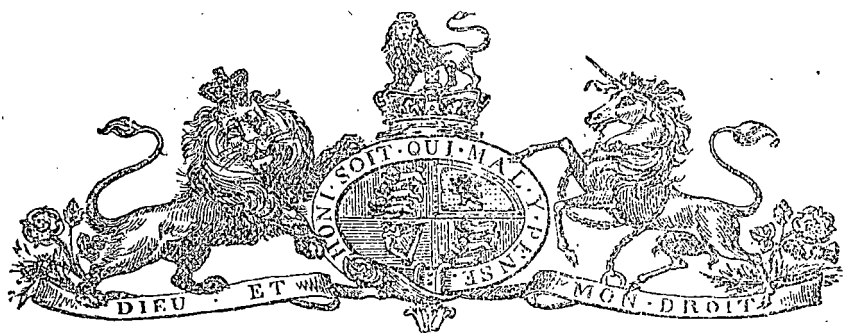
PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

ULVERSTONE-BURNIE RAILWAY:

REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT
RAILWAYS UPON PROPOSED LINE.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.

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TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS.

General Manager's Office, Hobart, 23rd March, 1897.

SIR,

IN accordance with your instructions of this date, I have the honour to submit a Report upon a proposal to extend the Western Line from Ulverstone to Burnie.

In February, 1890, you instructed me to report upon a proposal to extend the line from Ulverstone to Wynyard, and on the 31st March, 1890, I had the honour to submit to you my Report thereon (*vide* Parliamentary Paper, No. 89 of that year)—copy attached.

In some of the correspondence you have just forwarded to me I observe that it has been advanced as a reason for the immediate construction of the line from Ulverstone to Burnie that I had reported favourably upon such a proposal, and that I had stated that an extension would not only pay of itself, but would add considerably to the revenue derived from the remaining portion of the line.

I deem it advisable at the outset to point out that this is erroneous. On reference to my Report of 1890 you will observe that I expressed the opinion, and gave some reasons therefor, that if a line were constructed from Table Cape to Emu Bay I believed it would pay working expenses at once, and in a very few years would return a considerable sum towards meeting the interest on the cost of construction.

You will see that I expressed no opinion upon the financial position of an extension of the line from Ulverstone to Burnie alone. I wrote as follows:—

“In conjunction with this section of the line from Table Cape to Emu Bay, I think it would be wise to include the construction of the section between Ulverstone and Emu Bay, taking the inland route from Ulverstone to Penguin. This important addition to the Western Line (*viz.*, to Table Cape) would cause a general improvement in the receipts of the whole line. It would materially increase production, and enhance the value of land, bringing into cultivation land which would not otherwise be cleared.”

This section of the Report should be read with the fourth paragraph dealing with the proposed line as far as Table Cape, which reads as follows:—

“A very large area of land is under cultivation, adjacent to which is a considerable area in the course of being cleared. Beyond this again a number of sections have been selected, but owing to insufficient means of transport the owners have not yet commenced to effect improvements.”

I recommend that the terminus at Table Cape should be on the Flowerdale Road. I found that the produce was being carted as far distant as 18 miles to Emu Bay; and I was informed that good land existed inland for another 18 miles, or thereabouts, which would be brought into cultivation were railway facilities afforded as far as the Flowerdale Road.

I pointed out that the construction of small ports at Table Cape, Penguin, and Ulverstone would not afford producers the saving which would be effected by railway communication to Emu Bay and Formby (now Devonport). I regret that considerable expenditure has since been made in this direction.

The estimated cost of the line between Burnie and Ulverstone has been set down at £200,000. It has been frequently stated that this sum is excessive by 25 %, and a comparison has been made between this estimate and the cost of the Scottsdale Line.

In going over the details of the estimate, I find an equal comparison cannot be made between the cost of the Scottsdale Line and the estimated cost of the 18 miles between Burnie and Ulverstone.

The bridges and culverts are estimated to cost nearly £2000 per mile on the proposed line between Burnie and Ulverstone. On the Scottsdale Line the cost of the bridges and culverts was about £800 per mile. The tunnel between Ulverstone and Burnie is estimated to cost £21,000; the earthworks, £61,000; and rails, fastenings, &c., nearly £20,000.

There does not seem to be a very large margin for a saving in these items; and I think it may be taken that the cost of rails, fastenings, and all iron and steel work will be from 20 to 25% higher than when the estimate was made. The same remark will apply to locomotives and the iron and steel work for rolling-stock.

It may be possible, upon a re-examination of the country, to find that alterations in the route may effect some saving, and an alteration in the character of the bridges another saving. I therefore, in framing an estimate of the cost of working the line and interest, take an arbitrary amount of £175,000 upon which to base my calculations; but, at the same time, not committing myself to this figure.

Cost of working the 18 miles of railway between Ulverstone and Burnie will be found to be rather more per mile than the average of the rest of the Western Line.

At the present moment the train services and running staff between Launceston and Ulverstone are worked up to the full extent of their capacity. It would therefore be necessary to put on another train staff between Ulverstone and Burnie (a distance of only 18 miles for each train run) and the latter train service would not be worked up to its full capacity.

It may, however, be sufficient for the purpose of an estimate to take the average cost per mile worked of the Western Line.

The average cost per mile of working the Western Line as per last return was £357 per mile. This for 18 miles would make the working expenses £6426. The average receipts per mile are £406, which for 18 miles would return £7308, giving a surplus of £882.

But it must be borne in mind that there would be little or no goods traffic between Ulverstone and Burnie, and what little goods traffic would come to the railway would be short-distance traffic, probably not averaging 10 miles. We should therefore have mainly to rely upon passenger traffic.

Since my report in 1890, the number of passenger journeys on the Western Line has decreased 20 per cent. in 1895, and the passenger revenue has likewise decreased 34 per cent. The passenger traffic in 1896 was £195 per mile.

It may be assumed, I think, that the total traffic from all sources would be found to approximate £300 per mile. This would aggregate £5400. The working expenses I have already set down at £6426. We should therefore probably have to face a loss of £1026 on working expenses alone.

The interest at 4 per cent, at which rate I think the money has been borrowed, on £175,000 would be £7000. Add to this sum the loss on working account, viz. £1026, and we may anticipate a total loss per annum of £8026. This loss, I need not add, would have to be made up from the general revenue of the country.

A small increase in passenger traffic might occur if the line from Waratah to Zeehan were constructed, but I do not think we should find a large increase in revenue in this direction.

The water facilities and low freights for the carriage of produce are such that little or no revenue would be derived from goods traffic; and when we consider that the steamer companies carry passengers to Strahan, and feed them, for 15s. second class and 25s. saloon, I think they will carry the bulk of the passengers.

I am of opinion that it may be anticipated that the construction of the line from Ulverstone to Burnie would deplete the present net revenue derived from the Tasmanian Railways by the sum of £8026, at least, annually.

In conclusion, I beg permission to call your attention to a Memorandum I had the honour to address to you on the 21st November, 1889, on the subject of certain Leases of Land to the Van

Diemen's Land Company, together with certain rights claimed by that Company to use the Breakwater at Emu Bay. Should the Government decide upon the construction of the Railway between Ulverstone and Burnie it would be well that these matters should be carefully gone into.

I have, &c.

FREDERICK BACK, *General Manager.*

The Honourable the Minister for Railways, Hobart.

P.S.—Since writing my report on a projected line from Emu Bay to Wynyard in 1890, there has been a great shrinkage in all railway traffic.

The passenger receipts on the Western Line for 1896, as compared with 1890, show a falling off of 31 per cent., and the entire revenue of the Western Line shows a decrease of 22 per cent.; my estimates, made in 1890, should be correspondingly reduced for 1897.

APPENDIX.

EXTENSION OF WESTERN LINE RAILWAY TO WYNYARD.

*Tasmanian Government Railways, General Manager's Office,
Launceston, 31st March, 1890.*

SIR,

IN accordance with your instructions of the 20th ultimo, to inspect the country from Ulverstone as far as Wynyard (Table Cape), and to report upon a proposal to extend the Western Line to the latter place, I have the honour to state that, at the earliest moment my duties would permit, I visited the district referred to, and made an exhaustive examination of the country.

My examination included the country from Ulverstone to Table Cape, and embraced the Blythe, Emu Bay, the Cam, Stowport, Mount Hicks, Flowerdale, and Boat Harbour, besides a day's ride over a number of the Van Diemen's Land Company's farms inland from Emu Bay.

From a Railway point of view, I was pleased and surprised to find such a prosperous and settled district.

A very large area of land is under cultivation, adjacent to which is a considerable area in the course of being cleared. Beyond this, again, a number of sections have been selected, but, owing to insufficient means of transport, the owners have not commenced to effect improvements.

I am of opinion that no district in the Colony with which I am acquainted offers greater inducements for railway construction than that I am now dealing with.

Were a line constructed from Table Cape to Emu Bay I believe that it would pay working expenses at once; and for reasons which I will refer to presently, I have no doubt that in a very few years it would return a very considerable sum towards meeting the interest on the cost of construction.

A railway from Emu Bay to Table Cape (probably the terminus would be on the Flowerdale Road) would save the growers of produce and the shippers of timber from four (4s.) to seven (7s.) a ton in the cost of transport. This in itself would be a profit to the producer.

If the present cultivated land were afforded railway facilities, the area of good land beyond, by no means a small one, would at once be brought into cultivation, and the production of the district would be materially increased.

In conjunction with this Section of the Line, I think it would be wise to include the construction of the Section between Ulverstone and Emu Bay, taking the inland route from Ulverstone to Penguin.

This important addition to the Western Line would cause a general improvement in the receipts of the whole line. It would materially increase production and enhance the value of land, bringing into occupation land which would not be otherwise cleared. A considerable impetus would also be given to the export of timber to the Australian Colonies.

With regard to the inland route which I rode over, I think it will be found cheaper in maintenance, and possibly in construction, than the route proposed along the sea shore. It will be a convenience to occupiers of land across the Myrtle Creek, and unquestionably would meet the wishes of the residents and owners of land at the Penguin.

I deem it advisable to touch upon the matter of small ports and harbours in this connection, as from my point of view there is apparently some misapprehension in this matter. The construction of small ports at Table Cape, Penguin, and Ulverstone will not afford producers the saving which would be effected by railway communication to Emu Bay and Formby.

In the first place, if the harbours are only so improved as to allow of better transshipping facilities than at present, no appreciable saving will be found in cost of transport. If the harbours are improved to an extent sufficient to admit of intercolonial boats, such as the *Corinna*, loading, still the benefit to the district will not be equal to railway communication.

If the latter contingency were provided for, and I take it the country cannot afford the expense, the steamers could not spare the time to go round from port to port to pick up a freight without making adequate charges.

The tendency of trade is to concentrate at the most convenient points of shipment produce in bulk to await shipment. Buyers will bring this about in their own interests. Railway and storage facilities will result in an increased price going directly into the pockets of producers.

In conclusion, I have no hesitation in recommending for your consideration the further construction of the Western Line to Table Cape.

I wish to be permitted to take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to the Hon. William Moore and Mr. Norton Smith for the kindness and assistance they extended to me during my stay in the district.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

FRED. BACK, *General Manager.*

The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works.