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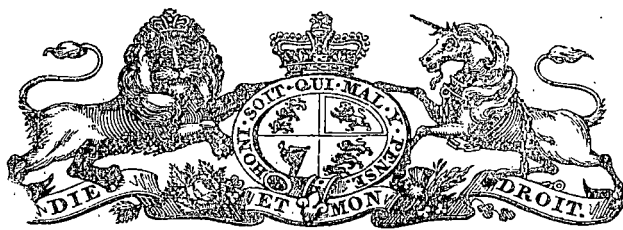
1891.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

Z E E H A N R A I L W A Y :

**REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER OF RAILWAYS, WITH
LETTER FROM MESSRS. REYNOLDS & Co., CONTRACTORS.**

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



ZEEHAN RAILWAY.

*Tasmanian Government Railways,
General Manager's Office, Hobart, 21st November, 1891.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to report, in terms of your instructions, that I proceeded to Zeehan on Tuesday last, with a view to making arrangements for taking over the completed portion of the line at once, and commencing to work the same. After going very carefully into the matter, I have arrived at the conclusion that, considering the short time which it will take to complete the line, it is not desirable that the Government should attempt to run trains until the contract is completed. The trains which the contractors are now running are more than sufficient to carry the traffic, because the tramway at the Henty is unable to keep pace with the traffic brought to the Henty by the contractors' trains. At the present moment there are from 800 to 1000 tons of traffic at the Henty. The point at the Henty where connection is made is confined by a deep cutting on the one side, and the steep bank of the river on the other. The limited space available was covered with goods at the time of my visit, there being no space to deposit another truck load.

The tramway, as you are aware, runs from the Henty to Zeehan, the approximate distance being $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles. At the best, it is a makeshift and temporary concern. The gauge is two feet. It runs over broken country with steep grades, and light bridges over gullies and ravines. At places there are not six inches of woodwork on either side of the rail, and the slightest mistake on the part of the horse would precipitate the team, and possibly the tram, down one of these precipices. Consequently, it is impossible to work at night, as the horses would be unable to see the track. At the same time I think that more trips might be made by the tram, and at least two more teams and trucks could be employed. The load for a team of three or four horses is one truck; the maximum load for a truck being four tons. In addition to the traffic by the tram to Zeehan, there is a great deal of intermediate traffic to the smelting works which are being erected at Pyramid Creek and other places.

Although our rolling stock has been ready to ship to Strahan for some time, it will take some little time to get it down. You are aware that we have arranged for the *Bowra* to run backwards and forwards between Hobart and Strahan with this stock as quickly as it can. We have already sent down a crane, and are sending two locomotives, nearly forty trucks, six carriages, and two vans. This will take six or seven trips of the steamer; consequently, some time must necessarily elapse before the stock is ready to run.

Whilst the line between Strahan and Henty is in fairly good running order, there yet remains a good deal of work for the contractors to do upon it. Their ballast pit is at the 19-mile peg, and their trains would have to run continuously over the line to enable them to ballast between the Henty and Zeehan. If we attempt to run our trains over the line at the same time that their trucks are working, we must necessarily delay them at times; and for such delay I have no doubt the contractors will require compensation. I am certainly of the opinion that it is not advisable we should attempt to run in the present unfinished state of the line; indeed, I think it would be exceedingly unwise and unsafe to do so. I am satisfied that were the Government trains running they could not do more in the way of traffic than is done at present by the contractors, and for various reasons, the principal one being the impossibility of getting the traffic through from the Henty to Zeehan by tram. At the present moment the Strahan wharf is covered with cargo to such an extent as to be almost blocked and unworkable. If this traffic was loaded up and taken to the Henty, there is not a square yard available on which it could be deposited. There are no crossing sidings nor telegraph and staff arrangements prepared, and it would be exceedingly dangerous to attempt to run trains over the line whilst the contractors had the right to run their trains over the same section. To meet the wants of the public, I beg to suggest that a definite arrangement should be arrived at with the contractors as to the number of men they are to employ to push on the line, which, with energy, might certainly be completed through to Zeehan in from six weeks to two months. An arrangement might be made with the contractors to charge such rates as the Government will charge when they are working the line; and an officer of the Government might be placed in the Contractors' Office at Zeehan, who should check all charges so that the public might be satisfied that the payments demanded from them were correct and fair. A Government officer might similarly be stationed at the Henty, who, in connection with the tramway, could perform similar duties. I am of opinion that, for the short time it will take to complete the line, this arrangement will be found sufficient.

With regard to the Tramway, until the Contractor can find more teams, and at least two more trucks, I would suggest that all general merchandise, together with material for the construction of the Government Railway, should receive preference: that the timber, bricks, and other building material should stand over until the press of traffic was reduced, or the line opened for traffic. Putting aside some little friction as to the matter of charges, Messrs. Reynolds and Company appear to me to have been carrying on the traffic as well as it could have been done under Govern-

ment management. They have many difficulties to contend with, not the least of which is the impossibility of weighing goods at Strahan, and the necessity for guessing in many cases at the weights. You are aware that it is the custom with all ships' goods to charge the sea freight by weight or measurement, the consequence is that a large portion of the cargoes landed at Strahan are charged by measurement; and, with the exception of such goods as tea, sugar, cases of spirits, and such like, the matter of weight has more or less to be a question of guess work. Taking all the foregoing into consideration, I do not think that any improvement would be made by the Government attempting to work the line; but, on the contrary, very serious risks would be incurred, and responsibilities which I do not think the Department should be saddled with, more particularly when we consider how very short a time need elapse before the line is completed.

I had the honor this morning to point out to you that the traffic to the West Coast had very much increased in volume, and that the original appliances at Strahan wharf were now quite inadequate for the traffic. The small wharf, 40 feet wide, at the end narrowing to 30 feet, with one line of rails only, is quite insufficient to work the traffic. The wharf should be widened to at least 40 feet up to the point where the connection would be made with the main line, and three lines of rails should be laid at once. The filling of the small pool of water adjacent to the wharf should be expedited, and the necessary sidings for working the traffic should be placed on this site. Messrs. Reynolds and the United Steamship Company have been allowed to build private sheds up to the wharf. These sheds should be acquired for railway purposes generally and made public sheds, and I understand that the tenure of the sites is such that no difficulty to this proposal will ensue. If these sheds are acquired, the proposed goods shed need not be erected at the wharf.

With regard to the Zeehan station, since the plans were prepared Acts of Parliament have been passed authorising the construction of the Waratah-Zeehan Line and the Zeehan-Dundas Line, both of which terminate and junction at the Zeehan station. No arrangement has been made for these junctions, and the construction of Grubb's tramway terminus in the station yards has so congested that portion of the yard that the necessary junctions of the lines referred to have been rendered well nigh impracticable. Grubb's tramway, as I saw it in course of construction, cuts off, and renders absolutely useless, $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres of the station yard. This should be altered at once, before the works proceed any further. As it was arranged this morning, when I had the honor of an interview, that Mr. Hales and Mr. M'Cormick should generally work out these details, it is unnecessary for me to touch further upon the matter.

In conclusion, I would remark that if it can be arranged with the contractors to give effect to my proposals for the working of the traffic between Strahan and Henty, and with the tramway contractors for the working of the traffic over the tramway, the public will have really nothing to complain of.

I think it would not be out of place in closing this letter to express the opinion that as far as the carrying on of the goods traffic by the contractors is concerned they have really done very well under great difficulty.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

FRED. BACK, *General Manager.*

The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works, Hobart.

Hobart, 30th November, 1891.

SIR,

WITH regard to the urgency of the completion of the Zeehan Line, and our conference with yourself and the officers of the Department thereon this morning, I am of opinion that, without unforeseen accidents, we can arrange to link in the rails so that the train can run through to Zeehan in forty (40) days. To do this the firm must work double shifts of men, and use every effort that (humanly speaking) is possible. As an earnest of our desire to strain every nerve to accomplish this, we are prepared, on behalf of the firm, to allow the Resident Engineer to order as many men as he may deem fit to be put on, at any point or points on the line, and to keep them there until such line is fit to run through to Zeehan.

You are aware that after the line is laid through to Zeehan there will be many minor matters to complete, but this need not affect the running of trains through to Zeehan.

With regard to traffic over the tramway, you are aware that first consideration must be given to food supply and necessaries. This being provided for, we are content to send the necessary material by tramway, so as to help on the work of laying rails into Zeehan, as the Resident Engineer may direct.

With reference to Mr. Back's Memo. as to rate of freight, check on charges, &c., we are quite content to abide by the suggestions contained therein, including proposal to charge a tariff similar to that with which the Government will open the line.

We are, &c.

T. A. REYNOLDS & CO.,
Contractors for the Zeehan Railway.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works, Hobart.