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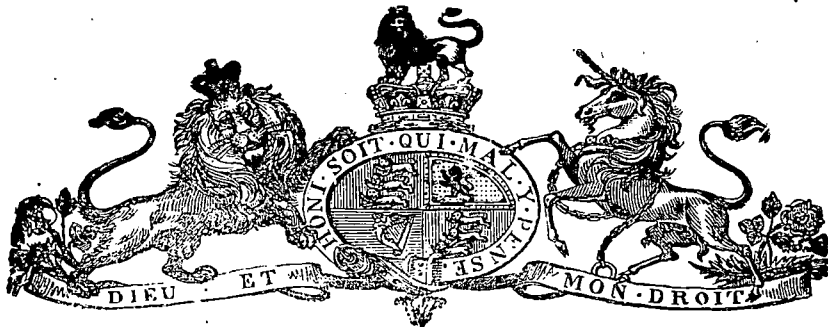
1890.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

CHUDLEIGH LINE.—SLEEPERS.

MEMORANDUM FROM THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF.

Laid upon the Table by the Minister of Lands, and ordered by the House of
Assembly to be printed, September 10, 1890.



CHUDLEIGH LINE.—BAD SLEEPERS.

THE explanation is very simple in this case.

Contracts for sleepers were let a long time in advance of the construction of the line, in order to ensure good results, and under the usual very strict provisions for inspection of growing timber, inspection at the mills, inspection when advances were made, and a final inspection by turning over sleepers previously stacked, at contractor's cost, when final delivery was made.

In spite of the assistance given by Department in the way of advances and extensions of time, one of the contractors was fined £40, and another broke down, and was not able even to pay men for the labour of turning over the very small portion of his contract which he had carried out. *In this latter case* it was found that the percentage of indifferent sleepers amounted to about 8 per cent.; and 650 were struck out of account, and *never paid for at all*. These sleepers remained just as the sleeper contractor left them for a very long time. The circumstances connected therewith became almost forgotten; and, by accident, were unknown to the Permanent Way Inspector. Then the general contractors' men took the sleepers just as they were (including the condemned 650), passed them through the machine, and laid them in the road. Directly I ascertained that this had been done (through one of Mr. Back's preliminary inspections), I ordered them all to be replaced before the line was handed over; but, on Mr. Back's final inspection, he requested that they might be left in so that he could get the benefit of what life there was, (I having ordered good new ones to be stacked for his future use); and this fair course to all parties being adopted, there is, I submit, no ground whatever for the agitation that has been raised by the Manager in respect of sleepers, as regards the Chudleigh Line at all events. I also gave the Manager a quantity of good sleepers on Ulverstone Line to make up for any faulty ones.

I have communicated with the Resident Engineer of the line in reference to this matter, and he replied as follows by telegrams:—

3/9/90. "Arranged with Manager personally, give him all the sleepers remaining and crossing timber on the Chudleigh and Ulverstone Lines. There are Three hundred on the Chudleigh and Seven hundred on the Ulverstone over and above the number of inferior ones. These were allowed to cover cost of removal."

3/9/90. The Contractor (Mr. Duffy) took out about Three hundred (300) sleepers and replaced them at his cost. They were a portion of Six hundred and ten (610) sleepers condemned before Mr. Duffy's contract was let, being stacked along with others. They were put in by his men when the foreman was absent elsewhere, and contrary to my orders, Inspector Smith's orders, and Mr. Duffy's orders. It was a mistake on the men's part, and not owing to bad management."

I also beg to attach a memorandum on sleepers from the principal Inspector of Timber as affecting those in question, and another memorandum to shew quantities that our Inspectors have actually rejected before passing other sleeper contracts.

Seemingly good sleepers may develop defects by splitting, shrinkage, or decay on being for months in the stack, after the whole have been finally accepted, and all contractors complain strongly of my very severe requirements in turning over scores of thousands of sleepers at the last, by which defects unsuspected at time of delivery are detected, but, it being provision of specification made for benefit of the Government, they have of course no valid reasons for these complaints.

MEMO. from Mr. JOHN BRADLEY, Chief Timber Inspector.

Extract from Mr. Back's Report.

"In the matter of sleepers there is great difficulty in obtaining really good ones; and were sleepers supplied during construction of a fair average throughout he would not make any complaint. As matters stand, renewals have to commence immediately traffic begins; sleepers which have commenced to decay, and sleepers of such green young timber that they shrink before the line is opened to a bearing of 7 in. instead of 9 in., are placed in the road to the extent of over 10 per cent."

SIR,

WITH reference to the above report, I think the impartially experienced will admit that in the construction of all railway lines a proportion of the sleepers get more or less damaged by the contractors' men, more especially where the Government, as has been the practice for the past six years, supply the sleepers, many of them being placed in the road wrong side up (with face next the heart exposed to the weather). This, together with the fact of their being of a great variety, combined with the rapid growth of some of our hardwoods, and the susceptibility of some (although previously sound) to decay quickly according to locality and quality of ballast, proves to railway men of long experience that, notwithstanding the most careful inspection, there has and always will be a number which will decay much quicker than others.

All our hardwood shrinks, more especially timber grown on the north and north-west part of the Island, which is almost, without exception, of very quick growth and consequently shrinks very much, even after they are put in the line.

Mr. Dowling, Permanent Way Engineer, knows that there is no help for the excessive shrinkage complained of in sleepers cut from quick grown timber in the above district. On looking at a stack of sleepers a few years ago on the Western Line, which he (Mr. Dowling) had got supplied for maintenance, I heard him remark that he was at his wit's end as to how he could keep them (apart from shrinkage) *from ripping to pieces*. There is no doubt but that Mr. Dowling has had, during the past 20 years, many such experiences.

Re inspection of timber generally, and sleepers in particular, I may state that, although I have been actively engaged in the timber line for 30 years, since being on your staff for the past 7 years, I have, through having been brought into closer contact with timber of all kinds and under all conditions, gained much valuable experience as to what timber is best adapted for sleepers, and I would suggest for your consideration that preference should be given to certain districts, and higher tenders accepted if those districts were favourably known as regards quality of timber. This, with the additional half-inch now added to thickness of sleepers (making them 9×5 in lieu of $9 \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ as formerly, and as on the Western Line), should make a decided improvement. Further, the felling of timber should, as much as possible, be done in the winter.

Yours faithfully,

JNO. BRADLEY.

To the Engineer-in-Chief.

CHUDLEIGH LINE.

The following statement will give some idea of the trouble the Department has had to secure proper carrying out of Sleeper Contracts on this line alone:—

M. J. Foy.

29,000 sleepers. Contract let, 29.12.86. Date for completion, 31.12.87. Contract had to be determined on 31st May, 1888, owing to unsatisfactory performance. Contractor only supplied 8802. About 8 per cent. (equal to 704 sleepers) were rejected before final payment was made; 650 of the condemned sleepers were left on the hands of the Department, but were not paid for at all.

G. Pease.

20,300 sleepers. Contract let, 26.7.88. Date for completion, 26.1.89. Final payment was made August, 1889. Contractor was fined £40 for delay. Before contract was completed about 8 per cent. (equal to 2280 sleepers) had to be rejected.

Cameron & Elphinstone.

5680 sleepers. Contract let, December, 1886. Date for completion 1.8.89. Two extensions of time were granted. Final payment made, December, 1889. Before contract was completed about 8 per cent. (equal to 456 sleepers) were rejected.

In addition to rejections of sleepers referred to on the Chudleigh Line, the Department rejected about—

11,000 on the Fingal Line,
3000 on the Derwent Valley Line,
9280 on the Scottsdale Line,
6120 on the Green Ponds Line,
3228 on the North-Western Line,
3362 on the Sorell Line,

or, with the Chudleigh Line, 38,834 sleepers altogether, before contracts were completed and final payments made.

J. FINCHAM.
4.9.90