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REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO REPORT UPON THE
DESIRABILITY OF BRINGING IN A BILL FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF
RAILWAYS.

Presented by Mr. Button, and ordered by the Council to be printed, 20 October,
1858.



REPORT

Of the Joint Committee appointed on the 1st October, 1858, to report upon the Desirability of bringing in a Bill for the Construction of RAILWAYS.

Committee:

<i>Legislative Council.</i>	<i>House of Assembly.</i>
MR. NAIRN.	MR. CHAPMAN.
MR. WEDGE.	MR. GIBSON.
MR. WESTON.	MR. ROOKE.
MR. HENTY.	MR. ANSTEY.
MR. GELL.	DR. BUTLER.
MR. BUTTON.	MR. CROOKES.

THE Joint Committee appointed to report upon the desirability of bringing in a Bill for the construction of Railways and Tramways in the Colony have given their best consideration to the subject; and believing that it is the duty of Parliament to authorise, encourage, and assist the inhabitants of this Colony, or any portion thereof, in effecting works and improvements of public utility and advantage, express their conviction that such works as Railways and Tramways pre-eminently demand, and should receive, the sanction and assistance of Parliament.

The Committee would call attention to the important fact that, in Great Britain and Canada, the formation of Railways has almost superseded all the main lines of road, affording a cheaper and more expeditious mode of communication and transit for merchandise, produce, and other articles between distant places.

The great importance of Railways has also attracted the attention of the Legislatures of the Australian Colonies; and to secure the execution and extension of such important undertakings, nearly all the lines that have been brought into operation, and others extensively projected, have been taken up by the Government of those Colonies, to be carried out by funds provided on the security of the Public Revenues.

The Committee, although fully aware that a long time must elapse before any main trunk line can be made available in this Colony, are yet convinced that by the construction of Railways or Tramways through populous and fertile Districts the productions of the Colony would be largely increased, its trade extended, the Public Revenue augmented, and the value of the Waste Lands of the Crown greatly enhanced.

Not unmindful that provision has already been made by legislation for the establishment of Road Districts throughout the Colony, and for the formation, construction, and repair of roads therein, the Committee yet deem it to be undesirable that the resources of the Colony should be expended in the construction of ordinary roads in those localities where the desired objects would be better obtained by means of either Railways or Tramways.

After reviewing the several schemes that have been adopted in other Countries for the construction of Railways, the Committee do not recommend that the example of the Australian Colonies should be followed in Tasmania, at least until further experience shall have tested their plans.

In the opinion of the Committee the construction and maintenance of Railways and Tramways should be undertaken by the Districts through which they pass, while Parliament should sanction the raising of the required funds by the guarantee of the Government, or by the issue of Debentures, on its being made to appear to the satisfaction of Parliament that the Revenue arising from such Railway or Tramway would be sufficient to defray the expense of its working, and the interest on the Capital expended in its construction,—the Government being indemnified by security upon the Revenues of the Railway, and the guarantee by assessment of the lands of the District.

For such a mode of procedure as is now recommended there is a precedent in the system followed by the Legislature of Canada, which has authorised the Executive Government to raise funds for constructing Railways and other important works, and to make advances to the local authorities on security of the Rates in any District applying for assistance.

The machinery necessary for carrying out the Canadian system has been already partially provided in this Country, and exists in connection with our Municipal Corporations and Rural Districts Assessments. These, the Committee believe, might be combined in their several localities so as to form Railway Districts, and would derive such direct and immediate advantage from being so constituted as might justify their taking upon themselves the pecuniary responsibility of making provision for a possible deficiency of income during the early stages of their working.

The Committee believe that the time has already arrived when Parliament might, with great advantage to the Colony, initiate some general measure in accordance with the views herein expressed; and the Committee would, therefore, recommend that an Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, praying that he will be pleased to direct that a Bill may be introduced into Parliament at an early period of the next Session under which Road Districts or Municipalities might constitute themselves a Railway District, and secure the advantage of the Government guarantee, upon their willingness to render the Railway Revenues and the Lands of the District liable as security for the capital and expense incurred in the construction of the Railway or Tramway, and the Interest thereon.

THOS. D. CHAPMAN, *Chairman.*

Committee Room, October, 1858.