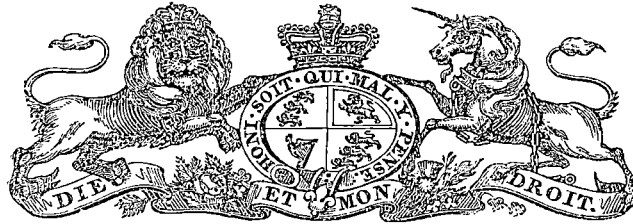


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1899.

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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

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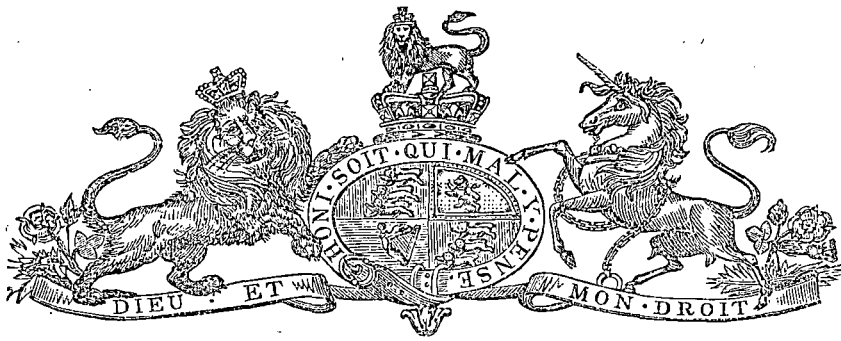
CHARGES MADE AGAINST THE RAILWAY  
DEPARTMENT:

CORRESPONDENCE.

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Laid upon the Table by Mr. Minister of Lands and Works, and ordered by the  
House of Assembly to be printed, June 7 and 9, 1899.

Cost of printing—£1.



*Minister's Office, Lands and Works Department,  
Hobart, 7th June, 1899.*

SIR,

THE very serious charges brought by you against the Railway Department of terrorism and espionage, and the general allegation that the Department is "rotten-ripe for reform" demand at your hands the fullest proof, or, failing that, such an *amende* to and exoneration of the General Manager of Railways and his staff as they are entitled to expect. I have, therefore, the honour to request that you will formulate the charges that you desire to press in definite terms, and the Government will, upon receipt of these, proceed to deal with the whole question by an independent Commission, or otherwise as circumstances may require.

I have to point out, however, that your charges, if they are to be considered by a Commission, must be based upon substantial evidence and recent events; and further, that it is not contemplated that those matters, such as the Back-Batchelor controversy and others, which have been long since dealt with and disposed of, shall be revived.

Your charges that terrorism and espionage now exist, and that the Government Railway System is at the present time "rotten-ripe for reform," should not have been made unless you had more recent and something more like proof than you have yet advanced, or that can be raked up out of bygone enquiries; and you are challenged to produce these proofs, or to withdraw from a position you cannot maintain.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

EDWARD T. MILES, *Minister for Railways.*

*The Hon. W. HARTNOLL, M.H.A., Hobart.*

*Hobart, 8th June, 1899.*

SIR,

I HAVE to acknowledge your letter of yesterday's date, and I desire to state that the one-sided character of the contents has caused me considerable surprise, although I can well understand why it is your expressed wish that the investigation should be reduced to very narrow limits, and permit me to state that an enquiry laid down on the lines of your letter would in no way meet the exigencies of the case.

Your request that all charges must be of recent date is unique, as it embodies an undefined term, which might mean in your judgment a period entirely different to what I might consider necessary in dealing with so important a subject.

Again, you make the very modest request that I must abstain from introducing any matters connected with the retirement of Mr. Batchelor. To this I cannot agree, as it unmistakably means that you wish to exclude any enquiry into the Locomotive branch of your Department, while, on the other hand, I regard this branch as requiring thorough reform, as many thousands of pounds of public money may be wasted or saved, according to its administration, and the safety of the public imperilled, if the supervision is not efficient in all respects. You state that Mr. Batchelor's case has been already dealt with. To this I cannot concur, as I contend that his case has never yet been touched, beyond some minor details, which were considered and reported upon by a Select Committee, on the 30th August, 1895; but the evidence before the members of that Committee led them to advise that this branch of the Service should be under the control of its Superintendent, uninfluenced, as heretofore, by the General Manager; and, notwithstanding that, the Minister of Railways gave his assurance that this recommendation would be strictly carried out. It has been from that day to this practically ignored.

I regard many of the matters connected with Mr. Batchelor's severance from the Service as highly important, as it embraces the very subjects which, in my judgment, the public has been led to entertain an absolutely wrong impression about.

I claim to introduce any incidents that tend to show where administration is faulty, irrespective of the date of the occurrence, and I regret that there is a disposition shown to exclude evidence which might enlighten the public mind. I clearly understood from your remarks in the House of Assembly that you were determined to institute a most searching enquiry into all the matters that I have referred to. I cannot conceive how any searching enquiry can be made without including the Locomotive Department during Mr. Batchelor's time. So soon as I receive the correspondence and evidence, and other information which I might find necessary to obtain, I will be in a position to justify my remarks in the House of Assembly which contain the charges you ask me to formulate. It must, however, be clearly understood that, as the constitution of the body to deal with the subject is of vital importance, I will decline to be a party to what might prove a farce, which such an enquiry would be if not conducted by a professional Board consisting of men of expert locomotive knowledge, and free from the natural bias of local surroundings.

As I will be quite willing to submit myself to the examination of counsel, I shall require that Mr. Back will do likewise; and further, that the Press may have full access to all meetings. I want nothing hidden, and am convinced that any enquiry that does not cover all the affairs of our railway system will not lead to the reformation that I consider imperatively necessary.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM HARTNOLL.

Hon. E. T. MILES, M.H.A.,  
Minister of Railways, Hobart.

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Tasmanian Government Railways,  
General Manager's Office, Hobart, 9th June, 1899.

SIR,

I CAN only regard Mr. Hartnoll's reply as a deliberate attempt to re-open the Batchelor Enquiry, with myself as the defendant instead of the accuser. Now, I underwent all the pain and worry in preparing a case to be heard before the present Chief Justice and two other gentlemen who were appointed a Commission. Mr. Batchelor, however, desired to withdraw from the Service rather than face the trial. To this course I reluctantly consented at the request of the Premier. The Board appointed to hear *my case* was disbanded, and Mr. Batchelor received a large sum of money upon his retirement. I claim, I think with every justice on my side, that the Batchelor business is settled so far as I am concerned.

With regard to the general charges, Mr. Hartnoll in his speech said, I believe, "That a system of terrorism prevails throughout the Service, and that there is a system of spies and favourites in the Department under which honest men who have given faithful service are degraded, and men who have no sufficient service have been promoted."

It does not require a Board of qualified locomotive experts to deal with these matters. A Judge of the Supreme Court would be better competent.

Mr. Hartnoll made deliberate statements in the House, and he was called upon by you to formulate the charges in support of them. Before making the very sweeping assertions which Mr. Hartnoll saw fit to do, he should, in honour, have had all his facts and details prepared. He now, however, asks for a *fishing enquiry* that he may overhaul the correspondence of the Department to find *something* on which to hang a charge. Here I must claim the protection of Ministers, and, if necessary, of Members of Parliament.

My duties have been carried out fearlessly and to the expressed satisfaction of Ministers, and, I believe, of the majority of the Members of the Legislature, and I must now ask that this matter may be definitely settled.

I have, &c.,

FRED. BACK, General Manager.

Hon. E. T. MILES, M.H.A.,  
Minister of Railways, Hobart.