

SESS. II.—1891.
NEW ZEALAND.

LOCOMOTIVE BOILERS ORDERED FROM ENGLAND

(CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO THE).

Return to an Order of the House of Representatives, dated 1st July, 1891.

Ordered, “(1.) That all correspondence, if any, relating to the ordering of four locomotive boilers from England that has passed between the Railway Commissioners and the Minister for Public Works be laid upon the table, together with the following information: (2.) Whether the aforesaid boilers were publicly tendered for or not in the Home market? (3.) The cost of the boilers and the cost of similar boilers made in Addington workshops? And (4.) Why the boilers were not tendered for in New Zealand?”—(Mr. EARNSHAW.)

1. CORRESPONDENCE between the Railway Commissioners and the Minister for Public Works relating to the ordering of four locomotive boilers from England: This is attached.

2. Whether the aforesaid boilers were publicly tendered for or not in the Home market? This is explained in the correspondence.

3. The cost of the boilers: The cost of the four boilers, delivered in the colony, has been £1,980. The cost of four somewhat similar boilers built in Addington workshops has been £1,818, but they are not precisely like those imported; and if allowance is made for superiority in design in some respects of the imported boilers, it might be expected that the cost of building them at Addington would have been about the same as importing them.

4. Why the boilers were not tendered for in New Zealand? This is dealt with in the correspondence.

Railway Commissioners' Office, 7th July, 1891.

No. 1.

The RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works, Wellington.

13th April, 1891.

MR. PERCEVAL is mainly correct. The railways have been obliged to order four boilers for renewals from England, value about £1,800, which they would have preferred to have made in the workshops had the accommodation been available. In the ordinary course of work this class of boiler is being made in the shops for renewals, but with present accommodation the work has not been proceeding fast enough. In explanation of this the Commissioners beg to refer to the correspondence which has been going on during the past two years with the Government about additions to opened lines. The Commissioners were disappointed in the Government's failure to provide moderate means to extend the shops to carry on the increasing maintenance.

The locomotive repairs are rapidly increasing on account of the growing age of the stock, and, though the Commissioners had from “working expenses” extended their premises and machinery to partially meet these wants, their means were not enough to provide works so as to enable these boilers to be done in proper time.

The Commissioners take this opportunity of drawing the Government's attention to their recent request for funds to provide such works as they think necessary to meet the increasing traffic and maintenance, and to again ask if the Government will be able to see its way to place the necessary sum on this year's estimates.

JAMES MCKERROW, Chief Commissioner of Railways.

Enclosure.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 5th March, 1891.

A rumour is in circulation in the Addington workshops, and outside the shops also, that the Commissioners have sent an order to England for new boilers for a class of engines in general use. The boilers referred to can well be made in the shops, and similar boilers have been made in Christchurch

I have not been able to trace the rumour to any definite source, much less to discover there is any ground for the report, but as the rumour is in circulation I would ask you to request the Railway Commissioners to place you in the position of being able to deny it.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
W. B. PERCEVAL.

No. 2.

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to the RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS.

The Railway Commissioners.

21st April, 1891.

RE renewal boilers ordered from England: The contents of your memorandum of the 13th instant, on the above-mentioned subject, have been duly noted, and an interim reply sent to Mr. Perceval, M.H.R., on the subject. Before Mr. Perceval's letter can be replied to fully, however, it is necessary that the Government should be in possession of some further information in reference to the matter, and I should therefore be much obliged if you would be so good as to furnish me with replies to the following queries at your early convenience accordingly: (1.) Could not the boilers in question have been made in the colony, and was any colonial engineering firm asked for a quotation for them? (2.) Was the order that was sent to England for the boilers directed to be intrusted to any particular firm for execution, or were tenders directed to be invited for the work? (3.) How many renewal boilers were under construction in the Addington and Hillside workshops respectively at the time that the order for the four boilers referred to was sent to England? (4.) How many boiler-makers have been discharged from the two workshops mentioned during the last twelve months, and have all those retained worked full time during the same period?

R. J. SEDDON, Minister for Public Works.

No. 3.

The RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works, Wellington.

28th April, 1891.

IN reply to your letter of the 21st instant the Railway Commissioners beg to draw your attention to the absence of any reference by you to the very pressing question raised by them—viz., as to the intentions of the Government as regards providing funds for additions to opened lines to meet the exigencies of the traffic maintenance.

It is now more than two months since the Commissioners first addressed you, drawing attention to the previous correspondence on this subject.

As regards the minor points of your letter: Although the Commissioners obtain from colonial contractors such work as it is found suitable to get, as, for instance, girder-work, they do not think it advisable to get locomotive-boiler work done by tender in the colony.

In the absence of any intimation from the Government of its intention to provide the funds required, prudence demands that the Commissioners should, from time to time, order further proportions of work from England, as certain duties with regard to the safety of the railways and the convenience of the public are imposed on the Commissioners by the Government Railways Act which they must not neglect.

As regards the practice in the Government offices in London in obtaining supplies, except in the case of special brands of goods which may be manufactured only by one firm, it is usual to invite tenders. The Agent-General would invite tenders for all such work as boilers, locomotives, rails, &c.

The Commissioners do not think it necessary to reply to the third and fourth questions.

JAMES MCKERROW, Chief Commissioner of Railways.

No. 4.

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to the RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS.

The Railway Commissioners.

6th May, 1891.

RE renewal boilers ordered from England: I am directed by the Minister for Public Works to acknowledge the receipt of the Chief Commissioner's memorandum of the 28th ultimo on the above-mentioned subject, and to reply thereto as follows:—

1. The reason why no mention was made in the Minister's memorandum of the 21st ultimo to the matter of providing further funds for works on opened lines was that it seemed inadvisable to merge the question then immediately at issue—viz., the reasons that induced the Commissioners to send to England for renewal boilers, that it appeared to the Minister might have been made in the colony, in the larger question of the improvement of the opened lines generally.

As, however, the Commissioners apparently desired an answer to their inquiries as to what provision would be made for works on opened lines during the current financial year, before carrying the correspondence on the minor matter of the renewal boilers any further, the Minister at once directed me to inform you that provision would be made in the Public Works Estimates for 1891–92 for works on opened lines to the extent of £20,000, and I had the honour to inform you to that effect accordingly by memorandum No. 88/1191, of the 29th ultimo.

2. This larger matter having now been disposed of, the Minister directs me to again address you on the minor matter of the renewal boilers. The particular point on which the Hon. Mr. Seddon would be glad to be furnished with additional information in reference to this matter is as to the

grounds on which the Commissioners object to have locomotive-boiler work executed in the colony. The Minister understands that locomotive boilers and other portions all complete have been made by a southern firm of engineers, and that moreover the Commissioners have themselves made at least one locomotive-engine—namely, the one that was shown at the Dunedin Exhibition—in one of the railway workshops.

3. The reply of the Commissioners to query No. 2 in the Minister's memorandum of the 21st ultimo is scarcely as explicit as the Hon. Mr. Seddon could have desired, but the inference to be drawn therefrom would appear to be that the Commissioners did not give any express directions to the Agent-General as to whether tenders were to be invited for the boilers referred to or not, and that the Agent-General, in pursuance of the usual practice, would call for tenders for them as a matter of course. The Hon. Mr. Seddon would be glad if you would kindly inform him whether the inference which he has drawn from your remarks is a correct one, and if so, I am to request you to be so good as to state whether the Commissioners have received any advices from the Agent-General intimating that tenders were or were not invited for the work.

4. I am also to ask the Commissioners to kindly state why they do not think it necessary to reply to the queries Nos. 3 and 4 in the Minister's memorandum of the 21st ultimo, and particularly to inquire whether the Minister is to understand from this that the Commissioners refuse to furnish the Government with information as to work that is in hand in the railway workshops, and as to the capacity of the shops for the work required of them, and also as to the number of employes engaged therein.

In connection with this matter I am to point out that the Commissioners are urging that funds should be provided for enlarging the shops and rendering them more efficient; and to enable the Government to determine to what extent they will ask Parliament to accede to the Commissioners demands, and afterwards to be in a position to justify the vote proposed to meet the same when the estimates are under consideration in the House, it is absolutely necessary that full information on the points raised should be furnished.

H. J. H. BLOW,

Assistant Under-Secretary for Public Works.

No. 5.

The RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS to the ASSISTANT UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.

The Assistant Under-Secretary for Public Works.

11th May, 1891.

ADDITIONS to opened lines: In reply to your memorandum of the 6th May, 1891, on the subject of boiler renewals, I am directed by the Railway Commissioners to express their regret that they have failed to make themselves fully understood to the Minister. They hasten to supplement their former communications.

They beg, however, to point out that the larger matter is not disposed of as is stated in your letter. The provision of £20,000 is not sufficient. Matters of this kind can only be disposed of by making a proper provision to meet the wants of the public service. The Commissioners are of opinion that there has of late years been false system pursued with the railways, the sole object being apparently to make as many miles of road as possible, regardless of whether the lines can be made to pay interest on capital or even working expenses; at the same time no adequate provision is made to meet the necessities of the increasing traffic in the more settled parts of the colony, nor are proper appliances and provisions made for working the new lines opened, nor are machinery and shop-room found for adequately maintaining the increased mileage of the lines and appliances in the most efficient and economical manner.

In asking the question put in the second paragraph the Commissioners observe that the Minister has ascribed to them an objection which the correspondence itself indicates is incorrect. The object of the demands made by the Commissioners is to allow of the boiler works being done in the colony. The Commissioners, in their letter of the 13th April, informed the Minister explicitly that they would have preferred to have done the work in the colony, and explained clearly the reasons for not doing it.

The information given to the Minister about the manufacture of engines by a southern firm is incorrect. The Government some years ago made a contract for manufacturing ten engines solely in the colony, but the contractors ignored the conditions and imported portions partly made. Upon the officer in charge of the contract insisting upon the strict fulfilment of it the Government intervened, and made a new contract, permitting the contractor to use the imported portions rejected, paying therefore a lower price. The contractors, however, petitioned Parliament, and were paid in full, and the original provisions of the contract were thus frustrated.

The Commissioners have completed two engines in the Government shops, and have others in hand; but it is necessary, in order to enable them to do all the work they require, that more room should be provided; and they have to point out it is the neglect of the Government to find funds to provide the needful room and appliances which has obliged the Commissioners to order work elsewhere.

The Commissioners are surprised that their statement that the Agent-General would invite tenders for all such work as boilers, locomotives, &c., is not sufficiently explicit. The Agent-General invited tenders for the boilers in question in accordance with his usual practice.

The Commissioners have not as yet refused to furnish the Government with information as to work that is in hand in the railway workshops, nor as to the capacity of the shops, nor as to the number of employes engaged therein, as your letter alleges; indeed, the Minister has not asked for any such information, nor can it be supposed, having regard to the 27th section of "The Government Railways Act, 1887," that the Minister proposes to enter into the details of the railway management. The Commissioners, in informing the Minister that the accommodation at their

command was not enough to enable them to perform all the work they desire to do, think that they have sufficiently explained the position.

E. G. PILCHER, Secretary.

No. 6.

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to the RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS.

The Railway Commissioners.

19th June, 1891.

RE renewal boilers ordered from England: Your memorandum of the 11th ultimo on the above-mentioned subject came to hand during my absence from Wellington, and has remained unanswered until now, owing partly to my continued absence, and partly to pressure of departmental and Parliamentary business since my return.

As regards the larger matter of making provision for works on opened lines generally, to which you allude in the first portion of your memorandum now under reply, it is probably not necessary to say anything further at present, as since the date of your memorandum other correspondence has taken place with you on this subject, which will probably lead to a satisfactory solution of that difficulty being arrived at.

Your reply to the question asked in the second paragraph of the memorandum from this office of the 6th ultimo appears to have been written under a misapprehension of the question asked. You stated in your memorandum of the 28th April last that "although the Commissioners obtain from colonial contractors such work as it is found suitable to get—as, for instance, girder-work—they do not think it advisable to get locomotive-boiler work done by tender in the colony;" and the question asked in the memorandum of the 6th ultimo, already referred to in reference to this, was "as to the grounds on which the Commissioners object to have locomotive-boiler work executed in the colony." Your reply does not seem to answer this question at all, and I would therefore again ask you to be so good as to state why the Commissioners "do not think it advisable to get locomotive-boiler work done by tender in the colony."

Your remarks in reference to the contract for the construction of sundry locomotives by a southern firm of engineers do not seem to affect the question now under discussion. The point we are endeavouring to elucidate is as to whether the locomotive renewal boilers, which are the subject of this correspondence, could or could not have been satisfactorily manufactured by private engineering firms in the colony if the Government railway workshops were too fully employed at the time to undertake the work. It is difficult, therefore, to see how the question of the makers of those engines, being allowed to import parts of them in a more or less manufactured state, can affect this question, unless it was the boilers that were imported ready made, and this I do not understand you to state was the case. I have to thank you for the information contained in your memorandum to the effect that the Agent-General invited tenders for the boilers ordered, and have now to ask you to kindly let me know whose tender was accepted for them, and the price at which they were contracted to be supplied.

I also note your remarks that you "have not as yet refused to furnish the Government with information as to work that is in hand in the railway workshops, nor as to the capacity of the shops, nor as to the number of employes engaged therein," but I further observe that you still omit to answer queries Nos. 3 and 4 contained in my memorandum of the 21st April last, or to give any reasons for refusing to answer them, as you were asked to be good enough to do in the Assistant Under-Secretary's memorandum of the 6th ultimo. I have now to direct your attention to these queries again, and to express the hope that you will be able to see your way to furnish explicit answers to them, but that should you not be able so to do, you will at least let me have some statement for your reasons for refusing to answer them.

R. J. SEDDON, Minister for Public Works.

P.S.—I shall be glad if you will kindly let me have a reply at your early convenience.

No. 7.

The RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works.

26th June, 1891.

RE additions to opened lines:—The Railway Commissioners have the honour to reply to your letter of the 19th instant, and to thank the Government for its intimation that it is proposed to ask Parliament to vote the £40,000 required for additions to opened lines, although, until the money is appropriated and due provision made for the various requirements, the difficulty can scarcely be regarded as solved. The Commissioners hope, however, that this result may be finally compassed.

As regards the boilers which have been imported from England the experience of the Government on the occasion alluded to, when they accepted a tender for ten small locomotives to be built in the colony, was that, although the engine cost from 40 to 50 per cent. more than the imported article of superior build, it took three years to complete the contract; and as the duty is imposed on the Commissioners of insuring that the railways are maintained in a state of safety and efficiency, and that proper economy is exercised, they could not see their way to deal with the matter satisfactorily other than has been done.

You appear to imply that the information given to you respecting the manufacture of boilers in the colony is not relevant. The Commissioners' remarks were in reply to the paragraph in your letter of the 6th May, wherein it was stated that you were informed that "locomotive boilers, and other portions all complete," had been made in the colony. Whoever gave you such information misled you seriously, and the Commissioners desired to place you in possession of correct information, as the results then obtained had a very important bearing on the Commissioners' action.

Appended will be found a list of tenders for the boilers referred to which you ask for.

The questions Nos. 3 and 4, in your letter of the 21st April, do not appear to be relevant to the subject. They, moreover, appear to be in the nature of a cross-examination, implying a doubt as to the good faith of the Commissioners' previous communications, and tacitly assuming that the Minister occupies the place of a professional railway expert to whom the Commissioners are accountable, and who is to be the judge of the technical work of the department. As the Government Railways Act expressly forbids the exercise of such functions by the Minister, the Commissioners concluded that it would be unnecessary to reply to these questions.

JAMES MCKERROW, Chief Commissioner.

LOCOMOTIVE BOILER TENDERS.—(Working Railways Order, 12th July, 1890.)

Name of Firm.	Amount.		
	£	s.	d.
1. Neilson and Co.	1,820	0	0
2. Nasmyth, Wilson, and Co.	2,103	0	0
3. Vulcan Foundry Company	1,720	0	0
4. Stephenson and Co., Robert	1,972	0	0
5. Beyer, Peacock, and Co.	2,100	0	0

Vulcan Foundry Company's tender accepted.

No. 8.

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to the RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS.

The Railway Commissioners.

30th June, 1891.

RE renewal boilers ordered from England: I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your memorandum of the 26th instant headed "Additions to opened lines," but being a reply to my memorandum of the 19th instant on the above-mentioned subject.

In reference thereto I would, in the first place, point out that "no intimation that it is proposed to ask Parliament to vote £40,000 required for additions to opened lines," and for which you express your thanks to the Government, was contained in my memorandum. It is important that this apparent misapprehension of the terms of that memorandum should be corrected without delay.

I have to thank you for the information supplied as to the tenders received by the Agent-General for the boilers in question, but to point out that you do not appear to have replied to my query as to "Why the Commissioners 'do not think it advisable to get locomotive boiler-work done by tender in the colony?'" unless the paragraph in your memorandum as to Messrs. Scott Brothers' contract for ten engines having occupied three years in execution is intended to be a reply thereto. As, however, it is doubtful, to say the least of it, whether this is intended to be a reply to the question asked or not, I should be glad if the Commissioners would favour me with a further and more explicit reply on the subject as soon as possible.

As regards questions Nos. 3 and 4 in my memorandum of the 21st April last, the asking of which the Commissioners think implies that the Minister for Public Works assumes that he occupies the position of a professional railway expert to whom the Commissioners are accountable, and who is to be the judge of the technical work of the Department, I merely remark that no such thought was in my mind when I asked the question. My position in the matter is simply this: that as it will devolve upon me, as Minister for Public Works, to take charge of the railway estimates when they are under discussion in Parliament, it is absolutely necessary that I should be placed in possession of full information on the subjects referred to, so that I may be in a position to answer the inquiries in reference thereto which are almost certain to be made by members of the House when the estimates are under consideration.

In view of this explanation I trust that the Commissioners will no longer hesitate to furnish the information asked for.

R. J. SEDDON,
Minister for Public Works.

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