

SESS. II.—1891.
NEW ZEALAND.

LOCOMOTIVE BOILERS ORDERED FROM ENGLAND

(FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO).

Laid on the Table by permission of the House, by the Hon. Mr. Seddon.

No. 1.

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to Mr. W. B. PERCEVAL, M.H.R.

W. B. Perceval, Esq., M.H.R., Christchurch.

Wellington, 15th April, 1891.

THE Railway Commissioners reply they have ordered four renewal boilers from England at a cost of £1,800, and give as their reasons want of shop-accommodation and inability to get boilers done within time required. I am not satisfied that the reasons given are sufficient justification, and am asking further information. However, as you are aware, the Commissioners rule supreme.

R. J. SEDDON.

No. 2.

Mr. W. B. PERCEVAL, M.H.R., to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 21st April, 1891.

Your wire in reply to my inquiries, whether there was any foundation for the report that boilers had been ordered from Home, in which you informed me four boilers had been ordered, calls for further comment. I have already telegraphed that great dissatisfaction is expressed at the action of the Railway Commissioners. This dissatisfaction is based on the assertion that the work can be done as well and cheaper than it can be supplied from Home. There are plenty of private shops in which the work can be well and quickly done. You are aware that Messrs. Scott Brothers, of this city, have already made several engines (Class D) including boilers, and, as far as I know, no fault has been found with the work. The Class J engines, for which the boilers are said to be ordered, are larger than Class D boilers, but the work is practically the same. All the marine engineers, too, have appliances suitable for making locomotive boilers.

As far as the railway workshops are concerned, I am informed there is no difficulty in making the boilers there. The shops (Addington, at any rate) are fitted with the best machinery, and there is plenty of room in which to do the work. The men also have performed similar work: An engine was made at Addington for the Dunedin Exhibition, the boiler of which is similar to the J class. There are also blocks at Addington for boiler-work. I can hardly believe that the Railway Commissioners would order work from Home which can be well and cheaply done here, and I shall be glad if you will give the Commissioners an opportunity of giving their view of the case. My information, although carefully collected, may be misleading. It is needless to point out that the private shops are slack of work at the present, and there would have been great competition for work of the kind if tenders had been called.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works, Wellington.

W. B. PERCEVAL.

P.S.—It is also reported that certain brake-work has been ordered from England which could be well made here. Samples were made at Addington which were sent away, it is asserted, as patterns.—W. B. P.

No. 3.

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to Mr. W. B. PERCEVAL, M.H.R.

SIR,—

Public Works Office, Wellington, 1st May, 1891.

I have the honour, on behalf and in the absence of the Minister for Public Works, to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 21st instant, in further reference to the locomotive renewal

boilers recently ordered from England by the Railway Commissioners, and, at the same time, to forward herewith, for your information, a copy of a memorandum which was addressed to the Commissioners in reference to this matter on the same date as your letter, together with a copy of the reply which has been received thereto.

I have, &c.,

W. B. Perceval, Esq., M.H.R., Christchurch.

W. P. REEVES,

(for Minister for Public Works.)

[NOTE.—The enclosures referred to form part of the correspondence between the Minister for Public Works and the Railway Commissioners which has already been laid on the table of the House.]

No. 4.

The SECRETARY, Knights of Labour, Christchurch, to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

DEAR SIR,—

Christchurch, 30th April, 1891.

Now that the action of the Railway Commissioners is under the consideration of the people of the colony *re* boilers from England, I have thought it expedient to supply you with the following information relative to the railway boiler-making shops, Addington. A boiler-making shop has been specially constructed for carrying on this kind of work there, and contains the latest improved appliances. The following will, I hope, be of special interest to you:—

There are six boiler-makers and seven apprentices working, and not fully employed. There are two drilling-machines to drill one hole each; one drilling-machine to drill two holes each; one drilling-machine to drill six holes each; three combined punching- and shearing-machines, they punch one hole each and shear at the same time—it takes two men to work each machine; one set of rollers to roll plates any given circle; one plate planing-machine; one cold-iron saw (circular), to cut any kind of plate; one hydraulic-riveter; one overhead travelling-crane; eight fires available for angle-iron smiths and boiler-smiths—one half of them standing idle. No new boilers have been made since those turned out for the Dunedin Exhibition, unless some have been put in hand recently. In the fitting-shop there are no less than eleven machines standing idle; and there are two new lathes lying yet unpacked.

From the above, I think, it will be just to conclude that the Commissioners are perpetrating a gross criminal injustice to the colony to order such work from outsiders when they are in possession of the necessary plant and skill for carrying out such work with economy and expedition. I am speaking for a large number of men here who are cognisant of these facts, some of them boiler-makers out of work, with wives and families to support. I say that the present Government are looked to to do something to put a stop to this exploitation of our money by the Commissioners; and I feel sure that the country would be well rid of them at almost any cost. It is a sin and a shame that men, who are contributing towards the taxation of the colony, should be compelled to walk about our streets month after month in the hopeless endeavour to find the means of feeding and clothing their families, and work that they could accomplish be given to strangers.

I have, &c.,

W. T. GALE,

The Hon. R. Seddon, Minister for Public Works.

Secretary, Knights of Labour.

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