

SESS. II.—1891.
NEW ZEALAND.

WESTPORT AND GREYMOUTH HARBOUR BOARDS AND THE WORKS OF THOSE HARBOURS

(CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO).

Return to an Order of the House of Representatives dated the 17th day of June, 1891.

Ordered, "That all correspondence and papers in connection with the reconstitution of the Westport and Greymouth Harbour Boards, and the works of those harbours, be laid before this House."—(Mr. R. H. J. REEVES.)

MEMORANDUM for the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS. Wellington.

New Zealand Government Railways,

Head Office, Wellington, 11th February, 1891.

THE Railway Commissioners have observed in the public Press that the Government contemplates making material alterations in the Harbour Boards at Westport and Greymouth.

Owing to the fact that the wharf and shipping arrangements are necessarily an integral part of the railway system, and that the railway authorities ought to be paramount in all operations affecting the working of the railway, it is manifest that great inconvenience would be likely to arise by the railway operations being made subservient to the operations of a local body in no way responsible for the working of the railway or wharves, or for their financial success.

This inconvenience is not now a matter of opinion. The position of the railways while the local Board originally existed was quite impracticable, and it was aggravated by the fact that, although the colony found the funds, the Government could not obtain the supplies needed to perform necessary works on the railways except the Harbour Board chose to permit it, and the provision intended to be made by Parliament for carrying on national works for the benefit of the colony could not be used at the will of the Government, but only at the pleasure of a local Board irresponsible for the success or failure of the railways. This position was so entirely unworkable that it resulted in the Government being induced to take control by appointing a Board of Government officers.

The position in Westport especially is now a very delicate one. The railway staiths are being extended by the Harbour Board according to the railway plans. So long as the work goes on under Government officers (under the Marine Engineer), working in accordance with the Commissioners' views, this plan of proceeding may answer, but experience has shown that a local Board with independent officers is unlikely to carry on such works as are required by the Commissioners without great friction and trouble arising.

The question of a deep-water basin for Westport, involving a new station with additional sidings and new loading accommodation, is essentially a railway and a colonial matter, and one which, both in general scope and in details of design and scheme, should be wholly dealt with under the control of the Railway Commissioners, as it must materially affect both the mechanical and financial success of the railway and harbour on which so large a sum of colonial money is already expended.

The Railway Commissioners, therefore, respectfully beg to suggest that the Government should consider the subject with a view to eliminate any control or interference with the railways and shipping arrangements by the local Harbour Boards, and to give the Railway Commissioners power to do what is necessary to provide berthage, wharfage, loading, and station accommodation for the railway traffic.

JAMES MCKERROW, Chief Commissioner.

Railway Commissioners, Wellington.

RE proposed alterations in the constitution of the Westport and Greymouth Harbour Boards: I am directed by the Minister for Public Works to acknowledge the receipt of your memorandum of yesterday's date, relative to the proposed alterations in the constitution of the Westport and