

SESS. II.—1891.  
NEW ZEALAND.

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LOCOMOTIVE BOILERS ORDERED FROM ENGLAND

(FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO).

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

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No. 1.

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

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works. Railway Department, 3rd July, 1891.

THE Commissioners regret to find, from your memoranda of the 30th June, that the Government is still apparently in doubt about asking Parliament to vote the sum of £40,000 for additions to opened lines of railway.

On the 11th April last the Commissioners informed the Government that they could not accept the responsibility of naming a less sum. Under these circumstances, and having already supplied you with details of the proposed expenditure, they would respectfully request that their proposals be placed before Parliament. Should a less sum be voted it will be the duty of the Commissioners to do the best they can with it, but they think that with Parliament should rest the responsibility of refusal.

In the matter of your inquiries about the locomotive boilers the Commissioners are glad of your assurance that you had no thought of interfering in the technical work of the department. This assurance is all the more gratifying, as in the *New Zealand Herald*, of the 13th May last, you are reported as having declared to the public that you had obtained from another source than the Commissioners reliable information regarding the facilities for boiler-making at Addington, and that the accommodation complained of as wanting by the Commissioners was there. It might be well that you took an opportunity of correcting this statement, as it leaves the impression that you had been in communication either directly or indirectly with the employés of the Commissioners on departmental matters, a proceeding which may lead to insubordination in the service.

The Commissioners are indebted to you for affording them another opportunity for giving you correct information for Parliament. The proper explanation of the Commissioners' action is that, in their opinion, not having sufficient conveniences for carrying out the work they required, and having failed after repeated applications to obtain such funds from the Government as were necessary, they deemed it prudent to order the work elsewhere, and they have done what seemed to them to be best in the interests of the colony. The Commissioners would have preferred that the work should have been done in the Government shops, and hope that Parliament will be pleased to make such provision as will allow of their carrying on the work in future as they desire to do.

JAMES MCKERROW, Chief Commissioner.

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No. 2.

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

The Railway Commissioners.

Public Works Office, Wellington, 9th July, 1891.

RE locomotive renewal boilers ordered from England: I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your memorandum of the 3rd instant in reply to two memoranda from this office of the 30th ultimo, one of them signed by myself, in reference to the above-mentioned subject, and the other by the Acting Under-Secretary, inquiring how the Commissioners would propose to apportion the proposed vote for works on opened lines for the current financial year.

In reply, I would, in the first place, point out that it is very inconvenient and confusing to have the correspondence on the subject of the renewal boilers merged into that on the subject of the provision that should be made for additions to opened lines. This was pointed out in the memoran-

dum from this office of the 6th May last, but, notwithstanding this, each of the memoranda received from the Commissioners since that date on the subject of the renewal boilers, has contained more or less reference to the matter of the additions to opened-lines vote. For the future I should be glad if the Commissioners would kindly arrange to keep the two matters entirely distinct and separate.

As regards your remarks on the matter of the renewal boilers, and more particularly your reference to a paragraph stated to have been published in the *New Zealand Herald*, of the 13th May last, purporting to report certain remarks of mine on the subject, I have to state that the Commissioners would have shown me greater courtesy had they first inquired as to the correctness or otherwise of the report in question. For the impression which that report has left on the minds of the Commissioners, I am of course not responsible, but as these impressions, whatever they were, were apparently formed on wrong premises, it is not necessary to pursue the matter further.

I note your explanation that the Commissioners' action in sending to England for the boilers referred to was due to there not being, in the opinion of the Commissioners, sufficient conveniences in the Government workshops for executing the work. In reference to this, I merely remark that some difference of opinion exists as to the sufficiency or otherwise of the appliances and conveniences at the Government workshops for the execution of the work in question. The Commissioners having made the statement, however, and the responsibility in the matter clearly resting with them, I do not desire to say anything more on that aspect of the question.

Your statement, that the sending of the order to England was due to the Commissioners having failed, "after repeated applications," to obtain from the Government sufficient funds to provide such extra accommodation at the workshops as was necessary in order to enable the work to be undertaken, I cannot, however, allow to pass unnoticed. The order for the boilers was, I understand, sent to England in July, 1890, and I can only find two memoranda from the Commissioners prior to that date in which the necessity of providing funds for increased shop-accommodation was urged upon the Government, and in one of these (memorandum of the 20th June, 1890) you admit that "funds for most of these works were provided by the Minister in last year's estimates," but that the money had been diverted to the alteration of the line at the Purakanui Cliffs. So that money for the purpose would seem to have been provided once, but improperly expended on some other undertaking. On the 1st November, 1890, you wrote to the late Government on the subject, and on the 17th February last you drew the attention of the present Government to the matter, but the order was in England before either of these memoranda was written, and, moreover, no opportunity has presented itself to obtain a vote of Parliament for the work since the dates of either of the memoranda referred to.

R. J. SEDDON,  
Minister for Public Works.

[Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, nil; printing (1,200 copies), £1 1s.]

By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBURY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1891.

Price, 3d.]