

1919.
NEW ZEALAND

LIGHT RAILWAYS

COPIES OF REPORTS BY MAJOR H. VICKERMAN, D.S.O., IN CONNECTION WITH MATERIAL FOR).

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

SIR,— London, June, 1919.

In accordance with your verbal instructions of the 12th instant I have looked into the question of obtaining light-railway material, and beg to report as follows :

The War Office Surplus Stock Disposal Board has large stocks in England (chiefly new material) and in France (chiefly second-hand, and largely still in use or not collected from the war zone).

For the new material prices are as scheduled below, these prices being f.o.r. Purfleet, and not inclusive of packing or freight to New Zealand :

Track.— 20 lb. rails, £19 12s. per ton (including fish-plates) ; fish-plates, £24 per ton ; fish-bolts, £57 per ton ; spikes, £38 per ton.

Rolling-stock.— Four-wheel open trucks, 8 ft. long, £64 each ; bogie, open, to carry 10 tons, 18 ft. long, £160 each ; covered goods, £200.

Petrol Tractors.— 20 horse-power Simplex, £540 ; 40 horse-power, Simplex, £850.

Locomotives.— Side tank, 9 in. cylinder, 12 in. stroke, 4 6 0 type, 14 ton weight, £1,775. Tractive power about 6,000 lb.

For the second-hand material prices are at present not listed, and vary according to its condition, the procedure being to view what it is contemplated to buy and then submit an offer. Some of the second-hand material is good, but generally it has seen a good deal of rough service, and is not to be recommended for permanent work.

It may be taken that for both classes prices are not bargain prices, and are 100 per cent. to 250 per cent. above pre-war, and not below those now current in the open market, the British Government's policy being to recover as much as possible, taking full advantage of present inflated rates.

Unless development is being hindered or money lost by delay it would seem, even where prospective traffic really warrants railways and not merely improved roads, advisable to defer buying till all the preliminaries of any railway scheme have been settled, as prices must drop sooner or later.

The gauge used in France was 60 cm. (just under 2 ft.), and the weight of rail 20 lb. per lineal yard. For light railways this gauge would suit New Zealand, but where heavy traffic is anticipated the rails should be heavier. A selection of quite suitable locomotives and rolling-stock could be made from War Department stocks, these representing most of the best-known British firms.

If you desire I could view second-hand stocks and lodge the necessary tender, but in that case I would need particulars of your requirements and the Disposal Board would need assurance of definite business.

I have, &c.,
H. VICKERMAN.

The Right Hon. the Prime Minister of New Zealand, London.

SIR,— London, 17th June, 1919.

Re Light Railways.

Referring to my report of the 14th June, 1919 (wrongly dated 16th June), and to your verbal instructions of the 14th instant, to furnish estimates of cost of railways (2 ft. gauge), including necessary rolling-stock, based on (1) current War Office prices for second-hand material, (2) current prices for new material, (3) normal prices for new material, I beg to report as follows :—

Further inquiries in the effort to elicit the price of second-hand material said to be available in the hands of the Disposal Board reveal a changed position—viz., that the Board really has no second-hand material for sale, it having been decided to hand over to the French and Belgian Governments, for the repair of the devastated war zone, all the light-railway material in the war areas occupied by the British.

It is useless, therefore, to figure on obtaining second-hand material, and estimates are only furnished for new.