

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.

Without knowing something of the proposed railway system, particularly the grades, distances to centres of production, nature of traffic, exact figures are impossible. I have assumed 1-in-40 grades, one length of railway 50 miles long, stations about 2 miles apart, all furnishing traffic; that business enough to pay 5 per cent. interest will be available, and that an average rate of 6d. per ton-mile may be charged on goods.

Though 20 lb. per lineal yard rails were used for war purposes, I would strongly recommend 30 lb. (or heavier) as more economical where passenger traffic is to be run, and have figured accordingly.

I estimate approximate costs as under:—

	Cost per Mile, 1919 Prices.	Normal Prices.
	£	£
Land, earthworks, bridges, culverts, fencing	860	840
30 lb. rails, fish-plates, bolts, spikes	1,150	580
Ballast, sleepers, laying rails	600	600
Station buildings and equipment	200	175
Rolling-stock	600	350
Engineering expenses	150	150
	£3,560	£2,695

If roads are followed and railway built at the side, up to £400 per mile might be saved.

If 20 lb. rails were used, £180 per mile would be saved in normal times and £380 now.

Assuming roads are made use of in parts, the average cost per mile of railway fully equipped may be taken as £2,500 in normal times and £3,400 now.

The cost of material to be obtained in England would normally be, per mile, £950, and at present prices £1,850.

If you require my services in connection with any purchases, I expect to be in England till towards the end of August.

H. VICKERMAN.

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

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (650 copies), £1 10s.

By Authority: MARCUS F. MARKS, Government Printer, Wellington.—1919.

Price 3d.]