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VICTORIA.

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON RAILWAYS.

SIXTH GENERAL REPORT.

PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE "RAILWAYS STANDING
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The Honorable DONALD MELVILLE
The Honorable EDWARD MOREY.

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VICE-CHAIRMAN—THE HONORABLE DONALD MELVILLE, M.L.C.

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SIXTH GENERAL REPORT.

To His Excellency the HONORABLE SIR JOHN MADDEN, Knight, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Colony of Victoria, and Administrator of the Government of the said Colony, &c., &c., &c.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY :

In accordance with the requirements of section 18 of the *Railways Standing Committee Act* 1890, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways has the honour to submit the following General Report:—

I.—WORK OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE.

1. Since the Fifth General Report was presented a new Committee has been appointed ; the previous body, which was the third Committee appointed under the Railways Standing Committee Acts, having terminated on the dissolution of the sixteenth Parliament. Work of third Committee, October, 1894, to September, 1897.

The third Committee had been in existence from the 31st October, 1894, to the 28th September, 1897, a period of nearly three years. During that time seven proposals for new railways and six general questions were remitted to it by the Legislative Assembly for investigation, and, in addition, the Committee was asked by the Honorable the Minister for Railways to inquire into and report upon several other matters, relating mostly to projected works on existing lines, which were to be paid for out of loan funds.

In dealing with the various matters remitted to it, the Committee compiled and presented 26 Reports, and held 330 meetings. Meetings held; Reports.

The questions remitted by Parliament to the Committee pursuant to the provisions of the Railways Standing Committee Acts are divided into two classes:—Questions remitted to Committee.
(1) Specific proposals for the construction of new railways which have to be submitted in the Assembly by a responsible Minister of the Crown, and referred to the Committee upon the motion of the Minister ; and (2) general questions which can be referred to the Committee by a resolution of either House of Parliament. Section 8, Act No. 1350. Section 11, Act No. 1350.

There is no restriction on the number of general questions which may be remitted, but the Committee are precluded from considering more than one definite proposal for the construction of a new railway at a time. The Committee can only deal with questions referred to it. Section 9, Act No. 1350.

New railways
remitted to third
Committee.

2. Seven proposed new railways were remitted to the third Committee during the three years it was in existence. The following statement shows the names of the lines, their length, estimated cost, and how each one was dealt with by the Committee:—

PROPOSED RAILWAYS REFERRED TO THE THIRD COMMITTEE AND
REPORTED ON FROM OCTOBER, 1894, TO SEPTEMBER, 1897.

Name of Railway.	Length.	Date of Reference.	Date of Report.	Engineer-in-Chief's Estimate of Cost, exclusive of Land, Engines, and Rolling-stock.	How dealt with by Committee.
	Miles.			£	
Jumbunna to Outtrim ...	2·38	31 Oct., '94	18 Dec., '94	19,000	Recommended.
Glenrowan to Edi ...	19·82	6 Aug., '95	26 Nov., '95	62,292	Rejected, but a narrow-gauge line, 30·53 miles in length, subsequently recommended from Wangaratta, passing through Edi, to Whitfield, at a cost of £38,162.
Shelbourne to Cousen's Corner	6·40	29 Nov., '95	13 Dec., '95	15,432	Rejected.
Rupanyup to Marnoo ...	20	13 Feb., '96	22 July, '96	55,331	Recommended as far as Banyena, 11·16 miles, at a cost of £19,000.
Wangaratta to Whitfield (Narrow-gauge)	30·53	13 July, '97	5 Aug., '97	38,162	Recommended.
Lilydale to Yarra Junction (Narrow-gauge)	19·91	20 Aug., '97	24 Aug., '97	51,077	Recommended.
Prince's-bridge to Collingwood direct	2·07	27 Aug., '97	31 Aug., '97	201,685	Postponed, as time did not admit of the line being dealt with before Parliament expired.

The Jumbunna to Outtrim line was approved by Parliament, and has since been constructed. The Wangaratta to Whitfield narrow-gauge line was also passed by Parliament, and is now in course of construction. The instalment of the Rupanyup to Marnoo railway recommended by the Committee as far as Banyena passed the Assembly, but was rejected by the Council. The Lilydale to Yarra Junction narrow-gauge line also passed the Assembly, but was altered in the Council to a broad-gauge line starting at Coldstream, and, after a further reference to the Committee, which adhered to its previous recommendation that the line should be a narrow-gauge one and should start at Lilydale, the question was postponed for the consideration of the new Parliament which has since been elected.

General ques-
tions remitted
to third Com-
mittee.

3. Several general questions relating to the construction of railways were remitted to the third Committee for inquiry, the most important being as follows:—

Further extension of railways in the Mallee districts.

Narrow-gauge railways.

Selection of localities for the permanent survey of narrow-gauge lines.

Direct railway communication with the Northern Suburbs.

Mallee railway
extension.

MALLEE RAILWAY EXTENSION.—After inspecting and taking evidence on proposed extensions of all the existing mallee lines, and journeying through the heart of the country from Hopetoun to Mildura *via* Kulkyne and back *via* Pine Plains to Jeparit, the Committee, on the 25th July, 1895, presented a very full Report on the railway extension question. While acknowledging the rapid progress of settlement and the satisfactory results obtained on several of the new lines then recently completed, the Committee came to the conclusion that any further extensions were not then justified, as such extensions would have to be built through or in close proximity to areas held in large blocks under lease for grazing purposes only, without any right to cultivate. It was therefore recommended that Parliament should not authorize any further railways in the Mallee districts until the land tenure and

Report No. 1,
1895.

compensation questions had been legislated on, and that, in the meantime, settlement should be concentrated and cultivation encouraged on the large undeveloped areas served by the railways built during the preceding three years, at a cost of £300,000.

It was also suggested that a thorough inspection, by competent men, should be made of the country within 15 miles of the various surveyed routes to Mildura, with a view to the land being classified and the areas fit for agricultural settlement located and marked on the departmental plans, and further that, as all the holders of Mallee allotments were tenants of the Crown, the Lands Department should take steps to obtain statistics of the areas under cultivation each year in each allotment and the yield, for future use when dealing with railway and other questions affecting the Mallee.

NARROW-GAUGE RAILWAYS.—Owing to the expensive character of the existing narrow-gauge railways, broad-gauge branch lines, the high estimates for proposed extensions, and the cessation for several years of railway construction, except in the mallee districts, the attention of Parliament was directed to the question of introducing narrow-gauge railways for branch lines in Victoria, and the third Committee was asked to report on the matter. After obtaining information from Europe, India, and other countries where narrow-gauge lines have been built in recent years, and endeavouring to procure the fullest possible evidence on both sides of the question, the Committee passed the following resolution :—

“That this Committee, after fully considering all the evidence submitted, recommend the construction of 2-ft. gauge lines in districts where the traffic is not sufficient to justify the construction of broad-gauge railways.”

And, in a Report presented to Parliament on the 10th October, 1895, it was recommended that one or two trial lines should be built on a gauge of 2 feet, in suitable districts to be selected under the provisions of the Railways Standing Committee Acts, that is, by the railway construction authorities subject to the usual reference to the Committee of the lines chosen. Report No. 2, 1895.

On the 13th February, 1896, however, the selection of the districts for the permanent survey of the trial lines was deputed to the Committee by a resolution of the Assembly. The Committee, after visiting fourteen localities situated in different parts of the colony, reported that, in its opinion, the most suitable districts for the trial lines and those presenting the strongest claims to narrow-gauge railways were the Wandin and Warburton, the King River, the Gembrook, and the Beech Forest districts, and recommended that, in view of the importance of the experiment to the country districts, the trial lines should be constructed under the supervision of a competent narrow-gauge engineer, to be specially appointed by the Government. In the Report presented to Parliament on the 18th August, 1896, the Committee also gave a full description of each of the other districts visited, the quality of the soil and the products raised, as well as the physical features of the country and the settlement, and stated that when the trial narrow-gauge lines had been built it would probably be found possible to afford narrow-gauge railway facilities, at a comparatively low cost, to several of the localities inspected. Selection of districts for the trial narrow-gauge lines. Report No. 2, 1896.

NORTHERN SUBURBS DIRECT RAILWAYS.—The question of providing direct railway communication between the Northern Suburbs and Melbourne was referred to the third Committee on the 18th August, 1896. The Committee came to the conclusion that both the Fitzroy and Collingwood direct railways should be constructed, but that the Collingwood line should be built first. Direct railways to the Northern Suburbs.

The Report on this general question was presented to the Assembly on the 23rd December, 1896, but no specific reference of a line, as required by the Railways Standing Committee Acts, was made until the 27th August, 1897, when the Collingwood line was remitted for consideration and report. On the 31st August the Committee reported to the Legislative Assembly that time did not admit of the question being dealt with before Parliament expired if further evidence were taken, and that the Committee was not prepared to recommend the line without further evidence and fuller inquiry, and a report from the Railways Commissioner and an estimate from the Engineer-in-Chief up to date. Report No. 4, 1896.

4. The proposed works on existing lines upon which the third Committee reported, at the request of the Minister for Railways, were as follows :—

PROPOSED EXPENDITURE ON EXISTING LINES REPORTED ON BY THIRD COMMITTEE.

Proposed Work.	Expenditure submitted.	Expenditure recommended.	Expenditure not approved.
	£	£	£
New Engine Shed and other Works at Benalla Station	13,500	13,500	...
Regrading Works, Geelong and Camperdown Line ...	14,000	...	14,000
Regrading Works, &c., North-Eastern Line ...	19,000	19,000	...
Plan for new Railway Station at Flinders-street ...	88,444	...	88,444
Towards installation of improved Car Lighting ...	20,000	...	20,000
Improvements at Spencer-street Station—Concentration of Goods Business, increased Accommodation for Dairy Produce, Coal Gears, &c. ...	10,065	8,065	2,000
	165,009	40,565	124,444

II.—WORK OF PRESENT (FOURTH) COMMITTEE.

5. The fourth Committee at present in existence was appointed on the 23rd November, 1897, and held its first meeting on the 25th November; during the period which has elapsed since its appointment 77 meetings have been held. This Committee consists of the same members as the third body, with one exception, Mr. Styles taking the place of Mr. Burton as one of the Assembly members. Before Parliament was prorogued, three general questions and one proposed new railway were remitted for consideration, and the Committee has been occupied during the recess in dealing with these matters, which are as follows :—

Fern Tree Gully to Gembrook Railway.

Railway Extension to the Upper Yarra and Warburton Districts.

Railway Extension in the Mallee Districts.

Direct Railway Communication with the Northern Suburbs.

6. The Committee has decided to recommend the construction of narrow-gauge railways from Fern Tree Gully to Gembrook and from Lilydale to Warburton.

It has also been decided to recommend the construction of a direct line from Melbourne to Collingwood, and extensions of existing railways in the Mallee, from Birchip to Cronomby Tanks; from Quambatook to Ultima; and from Jeparit towards Albacutya.

The inquiries respecting the proposed railway to Mildura and Yelta are nearly completed, and a Report on the question will be presented as soon as possible after Parliament meets.

7. The following statement shows the approximate expenditure involved in carrying out the recommendations of the Committee :—

Lines Recommended.	Length.	Estimated Cost, exclusive of Rolling-stock.	
		Per Mile.	Total.
	Miles.	£	£
Mallee Railways—			
Birchip to Cronomby Tanks	25·25
Quambatook to Ultima	30
Jeparit towards Albacutya	17
Mallee Railways	72·25	1,842	133,084
Narrow-gauge Lines—			
Lilydale to Warburton	23·15	3,036	70,284
Fern Tree Gully to Gembrook	18·50	2,901	53,676
Narrow-gauge Lines	41·65	...	123,960
Melbourne to Collingwood direct railway	2·07	...	201,685
Total	115·97	...	458,729

Questions re expenditure on existing lines referred to third Committee.

Questions remitted to present Committee.

Decisions arrived at.

Expenditure involved.

The rolling-stock required to equip the two narrow-gauge lines will cost about £17,000.

8. In the Report on the question of Narrow-gauge Railways, presented to the Legislative Assembly on the 10th October, 1895, it was suggested that one of the narrower gauges—2-ft. or 2ft. 6in.—should be adopted in this colony if any departure were made from the Victorian standard of 5ft. 3in., as it had been ascertained that in several countries already in possession of two gauges—a broad gauge of 4ft. 8½in. or 5ft. 6in., and a narrow gauge of 1 metre—a still narrower gauge had lately been introduced. The Committee, moreover, emphasized the importance of fixing and adhering to a standard for the narrow gauge, and the 2-ft. gauge was recommended, with the view to lessening the cost of construction by means of the very sharp curves which can be used on this gauge.

This Committee decided to reconsider the question before any of the trial lines were commenced. It was ascertained that the Engineer-in-Chief had given directions that, in laying out the lines which have been surveyed since the Committee reported, no curves of less than 2 chains radius were to be used, and he informs the Committee that the 2ft. 6in. gauge can be laid down on such curves almost as cheaply as the 2-ft., the difference in cost only amounting to about 5 per cent., with the same weight of rail. The Engineer-in-Chief strongly favours the 2ft. 6in. gauge, as engines of much greater capacity can be used upon it.

Since completing the Report of 1895, the Committee has had the benefit of the opinion of Mr. H. C. Stanley, M.Inst.C.E., the Chief Engineer of Railways, Queensland, who has recently returned from a tour of railway inspection in America and Europe, and has presented a Report to the Queensland Government on the question of Light Railways, after seeing many of them. In that Report Mr. Stanley states :—

“As regards the particular gauge which should be selected, I have found it generally conceded by those who have had experience in the construction and working of narrow-gauge railways, that, unless for special purposes, it is not advisable to employ a less gauge than 2ft. 6in. ; and in the event of its being decided to depart from our present standard, this is the gauge I should recommend to be adopted.”

Mr. Calthrop, late Assistant Locomotive Superintendent of the Great India Peninsula Railway, whose opinion was brought under the notice of the Committee in 1895, has, after a thorough investigation of the question of the best gauge for secondary lines, decided to adopt the 2ft. 6in. gauge for an important line known as the “Barsi Railway” which he is constructing in India. Mr. Calthrop says of the 2ft. 6in. gauge :—

“There is no doubt that, as compared with all others, it is the gauge possessing the greatest carrying capacity per cent. of cost of track. It has sufficient stability to carry goods of very great weight and bulk, while the flexibility of its alignment is such that it can accommodate itself to country of the most mountainous and difficult character, at a fraction of the cost of a standard-gauge line negotiating similar difficulties.”

In view of these opinions, and as considerable increase in traffic capacity can be secured without an undue increase in cost of construction, the Committee informed the Minister for Railways that it had decided to recommend that the 2ft. 6in. gauge should be adopted as the narrow-gauge standard in Victoria.

9. In the Fourth General Report (1896), paragraph 8, the Committee drew special attention to the difficulty experienced in obtaining reliable statistics as to the probable traffic on proposed new railways, and stated :—

“In New South Wales an experienced railway officer, with a knowledge of the quality of land and of the freight value of the varying products grown in different districts, is sent to inspect a projected line. He spends as much time as is requisite in going carefully through the district to be served by the extension; he personally collects statistics of the probable traffic from each holding, computes its freight value, and estimates the prospective development of the district by reason of the railway facilities to be afforded. He then reports to the Commissioners, who carefully review the returns. A full report by the Commissioners is then placed before the Public Works Standing Committee, whose duties in dealing with the line are thus greatly facilitated.”

Standard for
narrow-gauge—
2ft. or 2ft. 6in.

Railway
estimates of
prospective
traffic on new
lines.

The Committee then strongly urged that such a system be at once adopted in this colony. Attention is again called to this matter, which the Committee regards as highly important.

E. H. CAMERON,
Chairman.

Railways Standing Committee Room,
Parliament House, Melbourne, 29th June, 1898.