

1909.
—
VICTORIA.

REPORT

FROM

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS

ON THE QUESTION OF

RAILWAY COMMUNICATION WITH DURHAM OX;

TOGETHER WITH

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE AND PLAN.

Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 17th November, 1909.

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EXTRACTED FROM THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

WEDNESDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY, 1909.

18. LINES OF RAILWAY REFERRED TO STANDING COMMITTEE.—Mr. A. A. Billson moved, pursuant to *amended* notice, That the following questions be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways for consideration and report :—

* * * * *

(11) The question of connecting Durham Ox by means of a railway with the existing railway system, and the provision of a deficiency rate.

* * * * *

--put and resolved in the affirmative.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS.

(*Ninth Committee.*)

The Hon. E. H. CAMERON, M.L.A., Chairman ;	
J. W. Billson, Esq., M.L.A.,	The Hon. D. Melville, M.L.C.
J. Cullen, Esq., M.L.A.,	(Vice-Chairman),
The Hon. Dr. W. H. Embling, M.L.C.,	E. C. Warde, Esq., M.L.A.

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* The compilation was a portion of the work of the Secretary of the Railways Standing Committee, who is paid by annual salary.

REPORT.

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS, to which the Legislative Assembly referred the question of connecting Durham Ox by means of a railway with the existing railway system, and the provision of a deficiency rate, has the honour to report as follows :—

1. The district for which better railway facilities were asked, by constructing a broad-gauge line from either Bridgewater or Inglewood through Serpentine and Jarklan to Durham Ox, contains about 203,000 acres bordering on the Loddon River, and lying between the Bendigo and Kerang line on the east, and the Inglewood and Boort railway on the west. The country is flat and is used principally for grazing, and also for growing wheat, oats, barley, and hay. With the exception of several low-lying areas adjacent to the river the land is suitable for cultivation, the soil being of a light loamy character. The average annual rainfall is between 14 and 15 inches, and the average yield of wheat from 13 to 14 bushels, though, in exceptionally favorable seasons, it has reached 16 and 18 bushels, while in drought years not more than 5 or 6 bushels have been harvested. Originally, most of the country was taken up in allotments of 320 acres, but owing to the distance the farmers had then to cart their grain to a railway station and to bad seasons encountered—before the system of fallowing the land was generally adopted—and also to there being then no adequate supply of water for stock purposes, many of the selectors sold out to neighbours. In that way the holdings were increased in area, the majority of them now ranging from 500 acres to 1,000 acres. There are also two estates in the district, one containing 33,000 acres, and the other 9,713 acres. The Serpentine estate of 30,000 acres was subdivided a year or two ago, and 33 farmers are settled on it. It was stated that the distance between the two existing railways was from 24 miles—at the Durham Ox, or northern end of the district—to 30 miles at the Serpentine, or southern end. Most of the farmers on the east side of the proposed line who would be served by it are within 15 or 16 miles of the Bendigo and Kerang railway, but they said the trip to stations on that line with a load of grain and home again “made a very long day’s work.” As the roads, though traversing fairly level country, are not metalled and are formed in parts only, the trip, they stated, was also severe on the teams, especially in hot weather when the bulk of the carting is done. Some of the farmers on the west side of the suggested line have at present to cart 18 and 20 miles to a railway station. When questioned, however, they admitted that if an additional bridge were built across the Loddon River they could reach one of the stations on the Boort line in about 10 or 12 miles. It was stated that the cost of cartage to the existing railway stations was from 1s. to 1s. 6d. per bag, or from 9s. to 14s. per ton, and that carting the grain occupied six or seven weeks at the time when the farmers should be using their teams to break down the fallowed land, and to prepare the ground for seeding. If the proposed railway were constructed the carting period, it was said, would be lessened and a larger area would be cropped. The land, because of its fairly level character and porous nature, was adapted for irrigation, and when the large water channel from Waranga Basin was made the northern portion of the district to be served by the line would then have an assured supply of water, and irrigation would enable crops of lucerne for fattening lambs or for feeding dairy herds, and also peaches, apricots, and other fruits to be profitably grown.

2. Mr. Kernot, Chief Engineer for Railway Construction, informed the Committee that there were two proposals for connecting Durham Ox with the existing railway system. The first was for a 5ft. 3in. line branching off the Bendigo and Boort railway at Bridgewater, and running in a northerly direction along the east side of the Loddon River through Serpentine and Jarklan to Durham Ox, a distance of 35 miles. Basing his figures on an old survey, Mr. Kernot estimated that this line, which would have a ruling grade of 1 foot in 100 feet, would cost £101,500, or £2,900 per mile, exclusive of rolling-stock and land. The track would be fit to carry the

ordinary rolling-stock used on the Victorian railways. Temporary station buildings, goods platforms, stock trucking yards, and turn-tables would be provided. If, he added, serviceable second-hand rails became available the cost would be reduced by about £300 a mile. The other proposal was to build a broad-gauge line branching off the Bendigo and Boort railway at Inglewood and proceeding in a north-easterly direction for about 13 miles to Serpentine, where it would join the survey from Bridgewater to Durham Ox. The Inglewood-Durham Ox line, which would cross the Loddon River on approaching Serpentine, would be 33 miles 45 chains in length, and was estimated to cost £95,700. Mr. Kernot stated a 3-chain road could be used for the line for the greater part of the distance to Durham Ox, and thereby avoid much of the proposed expenditure on the purchase of land for the track of the railway. The points in favour of the Inglewood route were that there would be less line to construct and maintain, and that Inglewood was a railway junction and a more important town than Bridgewater. The points against that connexion were that the Inglewood route would necessitate a bridge 300 feet long over the Loddon River; it would have two stretches—one 39 chains in length, and the other 20—of 1 in 66 grade against the traffic to Melbourne as compared with a practically level grade to Bridgewater; and would lengthen the distance to the Bendigo and Melbourne markets by $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The Committee ascertained from the local residents that they preferred the Bridgewater connexion because it would not only be the shorter route to Bendigo and Melbourne, but it would give them direct access to the large flour-mill at Bridgewater, where they sold the greater part of their wheat. After visiting the district and hearing the evidence of Mr. C. E. Albrecht, engineer of the East Loddon Shire Council, the Committee thought a cheaper line than that proposed by the Construction Branch would meet the requirements. It, therefore, requested Mr. Kernot to personally make an inspection of the Bridgewater route, and, on his doing so, he reported that after seeing the country and its character he had made a reduced estimate for the line, providing for an unfenced railway, except at the stations, for the minimum earthworks, second-hand rails, using earth instead of stone or gravel for ballast, and dispensing with all equipments which could be postponed because the traffic would evidently be light. In that way he had brought the estimate down to £73,075, or £2,088 a mile.

Population;
production.

3. It was stated by the Traffic officers of the Railway Department (Mr. C. Macaw and Mr. J. S. Mitchell) who visited the district to report on the probable traffic over the proposed line from Bridgewater to Durham Ox, that there were 800 persons in the area which they considered would be served by the railway, and during the season 1908-9 there were 17,277 acres under crop. In estimating the revenue of the line they had assumed that 5,000 acres additional would be cultivated in the event of the railway being built. The average yield of wheat for the district for the past five years was $13\frac{1}{2}$ bushels per acre. The number of live stock in the district, as furnished by the Government Statist, was as follow:—Horses, 1,732; cattle, 6,352; sheep, 113,881; and pigs, 370. It was estimated that 100 trucks outwards and 50 trucks inwards of live stock would be carried over the line during the first year it was opened for traffic, and that there would be 7,800 tons of wheat, oats, barley, chaff, &c., sent out of the district by rail, while the inwards traffic would come to 1,100 tons, including 400 tons of artificial manures.

Estimate of
annual revenue
and charges.

4. The Railways Commissioners estimated the annual revenue, working expenses, and maintenance charges in connexion with the proposed railway from Bridgewater to Durham Ox, based on a train service of three days a week, as follows:—

Expenditure.

Interest at 4 per cent. on £75,672, being cost (£73,075) of constructing 35 miles of railway from Bridgewater to Durham Ox, and £2,597 for rolling-stock	£3,026	17	7
Traffic expenses	389	1	10
Maintenance charges	2,065	0	0
Locomotive expenses and repairing rolling-stock	683	12	6
General charges	78	8	11
	<hr/>		
	£6,243	0	10

Revenue.

Revenue (based on local rates being charged between Bridgewater and Durham Ox) : — Passengers, £516 13s. 4d. ; parcels, £175 ; mails, £262 10s. ; class goods, £561 ; wool, £115 10s. ; live stock, £187 10s. ; manures, £26 13s. 4d. ; agricultural pro- duce, £1,286 5s. ; all other traffic, £70. Carriage of new traffic over existing lines :—Passengers, £60 ; parcels, £10 ; agricultural produce, £160	£3,431 1 8
Estimated annual loss	£2,811 19 2

5. It was explained by the Traffic officers that as “local rates” would have by law to be charged for the carriage of passengers, goods, and live stock over the new line, and as there would be a daily train service on the neighbouring parallel railways, as compared with a contemplated tri-weekly one on the Durham Ox line, the gathering ground for traffic in connexion with that line would be much less than was thought by the local residents. For instance, the rate on wheat from Durham Ox to Melbourne would be 14s. 3d. a ton with local rates, while the rate from Pyramid would be but 10s. 9d. Mr. Macaw put the area to be served by the proposed line from Bridgewater to Durham Ox down at 180,000 acres. The Committee agrees with the Traffic officers in this view, and also in the further statement made by them that there is no likelihood of a railway to Durham Ox paying until the estates in the district have been subdivided, and also until irrigation on a large scale becomes possible around Jarklan and Durham Ox by the extension of the main western channel from the Waranga Basin into that country, bringing with it smaller holdings and increased cultivation.

6. Notwithstanding that many of the local landholders expressed their willingness to pay an annual deficiency rate of a “reasonable amount” to meet any loss that might result during the next twenty years from the construction and operation of the proposed line, the Committee is of opinion, for the reasons given in paragraph 5 of this Report, that it is inexpedient to build a railway from either Bridgewater or Inglewood to Durham Ox.

7. As section 5 of Act No. 1350 prohibits a member of the Committee taking part in the proceedings of the Committee when a railway affecting his electoral district is being dealt with, Mr. Cullen, M.L.A., did not vote when this Report was being considered.

E. H. CAMERON,
Chairman.

Railways Standing Committee Room,
State Parliament House,
Melbourne, 16th November, 1909.

[*Minutes of Evidence are not printed.*]