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VICTORIA.

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON RAILWAYS.

TWENTY-SECOND GENERAL REPORT.

PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE RAILWAYS STANDING
COMMITTEE ACT 1890 (54 VICT., No. 1177), SECTION 18.

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MEMBERS OF THE TENTH COMMITTEE.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The Honorable Dr. WILLIAM HENRY EMBLING*
The Honorable DONALD MELVILLE.

* The Honorable Dr. W. H. Embling died on the 24th May, 1912.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

JOHN WILLIAM BILLSON, Esquire
The Honorable EWEN HUGH CAMERON
WILLIAM HUTCHINSON, Esquire
EDWARD COUGHLAN WARDE, Esquire.

CHAIRMAN—THE HONORABLE EWEN HUGH CAMERON, M.L.A.
VICE-CHAIRMAN—THE HONORABLE DONALD MELVILLE, M.L.C.

TWENTY-SECOND GENERAL REPORT.

To His Excellency SIR JOHN MICHAEL FLEETWOOD FULLER, Baronet, Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Governor of the State of Victoria and its Dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia, &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 Report of its proceedings :—

1. Since the date of the appointment of the present (Tenth) Committee on the 7th December, 1911, the Committee has held 115 meetings, and examined 205 witnesses in connexion with various proposed railways. In making its inquiries the Committee has travelled 2,092 miles by rail, and 581 miles by road.

2. The Committee has to record, with sincere regret, the death of one of its members, the Honorable Dr. William Henry Embling, M.L.C., who died at East St. Kilda on the 24th May, 1912. Dr. Embling was connected with the Committee for eight years. He took a deep interest in its work, and his assistance in its inquiries was of much value to the Committee.

QUESTIONS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE.

3. During last Session the following questions were referred to the Committee for inquiry and report :—

1. Portland and Serviceton Main Line Connexion railway.
2. Railway extension in the Eastern Mallee, and the provision of an adequate supply of water for settlement purposes.
3. Railway extension in the Western Mallee, and the provision of an adequate supply of water for settlement purposes.
4. Railway connexion with Skipton.
5. Gippsland and South-Eastern lines connecting railway.
6. Railway connexion with Barmah.
7. Railway connexion with Gonyah Gonyah, Jumbuk, and Bulga.
8. Railway connexion with Dederang, Tawonga, and Kiewa Valley.
9. Railway connexion with Loch, Toorong, and Latrobe valleys.
10. Railway connexion with Duggan, Fumina, Hill End, and Willow Grove.
11. Railway connexion with Yanac-a-Yanac and Netherby.

Several of these proposals were referred to the Committee by the Legislative Assembly in a former Session, but the inquiries had not been completed (for various reasons stated in the Twenty-first General Report of the Committee) prior to the dissolution of Parliament in October, 1911.

PROGRESS OF INQUIRIES.

4. Before the close of the last Session the Committee presented to the Legislative Assembly a Progress Report on the question of the construction of a direct railway from Portland to the Wimmera-Serviceton main line so as to give producers in the Southern Mallee and Wimmera districts a shorter route to the sea-board. In that Report the Committee set aside the suggested Casterton-Kaniva-Broughton connexion, but stated that a section of that route from Casterton to Edenhope, *viâ* Chetwynd, was worthy of being inquired into as a line to meet local requirements.

Since then the Committee has asked the Railways Commissioners to supply it with estimates of revenue and working expenses of this line. A Traffic Officer is now in the Chetwynd and Edenhope districts collecting the necessary data on which to base the estimates, and as soon as these reach the Committee a report on the matter will be submitted to the Legislative Assembly. Having rejected the Casterton-Kaniva-Broughton proposal, the Committee gave attention to the two rival routes, Hamilton, *viâ* Cavendish and Glenisla, to Horsham, and Hamilton, *viâ* Balmoral and Toolondo, to Horsham. The latter route had been surveyed from near Wannan, on the Hamilton-Coleraine railway, northwards to Balmoral, and the Cavendish line had also been surveyed branching off the Coleraine railway a few miles west of Hamilton. But the Committee ascertained that a shorter, less expensive, and better-graded route to both Cavendish and Balmoral could be obtained by leaving the Hamilton station-yard on the north, or Ararat side. It accordingly recommended the construction of a broad-gauge railway from Hamilton to Cavendish, 16 miles, at an estimated annual loss of £380, leaving the question of a connecting line from Cavendish to Horsham either by way of Glenisla, or *viâ* Balmoral and Toolondo, an open one until after the Committee had had an opportunity of questioning Mr. W. F. Fitzpatrick, Chairman of the Victorian Railways Commissioners, concerning the probable revenue and working expenses of both these routes and the likelihood of such a connecting line diverting the wheat and frozen meat traffic of the Southern Mallee and Wimmera districts from Geelong and Melbourne to Portland for shipment there. The views of the Railways Commissioners on this important subject have been submitted to the Committee, and when Parliament assembles a report dealing with the proposed connecting line will be placed before it. Last Session the Committee presented a report to the Legislative Assembly recommending the extension of the Linton railway to Skipton, 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles. As regards railway extension in the Eastern Mallee, the Committee in 1911 recommended the construction of three lines in that district, namely, Swan Hill to Piangil, 29 miles; Chillingollah to Manangatang Tank, 20 miles; and Sea Lake to Pier-Millan, 18 miles. When Parliament has considered these recommendations the Committee will give further attention to the question of railway extension to Narrung, and also to Euston, on the Murray River. In the Western Mallee the Committee has recommended the carrying of the Rainbow railway northwards to Nyppo, and also the linking up of the Ouyen-Murrayville line with the South Australian railway system at Pinnaroo. As soon as these proposals have been considered by Parliament, and the boring operations for supplies of water to the west of the Mildura railway and in the area north of the Ouyen-Murrayville line have been further advanced, the Committee will resume its inquiries into the question of railway extensions in the north-west part of Victoria.

5. All the local evidence has been taken concerning a railway to serve the district lying between the Dandenong to Morwell and Mirboo lines and the main line from Dandenong to Leongatha. A report on this question will be presented to Parliament in a few weeks. The proposed extension of the Picola railway to Barmah will also be reported on shortly. The Committee has visited the Gonyah Gonyah, Jumbuk, and Bulga districts, including Gormandale, and has heard all the local evidence. Various routes to serve this hilly but fertile country were brought under the attention of the Committee by the residents, and these are now being investigated by the engineers of the Construction Branch of the Railway Department to determine their practicability and probable cost. As soon as this work is completed the Committee will be in a position to submit its views on this question to Parliament. The Committee has inspected the Kiewa Valley, and has recently obtained information from the Forestry Department regarding the timber supplies on the hills overlooking the valley. It has also visited the Loch, Toorongo, and Latrobe valleys, including the Little Yarra Valley, as well as the Duggan, Fumina, and Willow Grove districts. Reports on the question of railway connexion with these places will be placed before Parliament during the coming Session. Evidence has been heard at Yanac-a-Yanac and Netherby concerning the need of nearer railway facilities, and this matter will be reported on in due course.

REJECTION OF PROPOSED RAILWAYS.

6. Recently the Honorable the Attorney-General asked the Committee to furnish him with a list of railways which had been rejected by the Committee during

the last five years "because they were non-paying lines." A reply was forwarded stating that no proposed railways had been set aside by the Committee during that period merely because they were non-paying proposals. In support of this statement the Committee pointed out that since 1907 it had recommended the construction of upwards of twenty railways which, it was considered, would be unprofitable undertakings for several years after being opened for traffic, but, as the districts to be served by these lines had good prospects of increased settlement and production, if provided with railway facilities, the Committee had no hesitation, under such circumstances, in recommending Parliament to sanction the construction of the lines. It was further explained by the Committee that the lines which were rejected by it during the last five years had been set aside, not only because they would be non-paying from the date of opening, but were likely to remain so for many years, as the local conditions did not justify the belief that the increased settlement and production would be sufficient to warrant the expenditure and that the land-holders could bear the deficiency rate.

NON-PAYING RAILWAYS.

7. In its last General Report the Committee stated that a few of the railways which it had recommended for construction during the last five or six years were expected to pay in the first twelve months they were opened for traffic. The others would, however, show an annual loss for some years, until the country served by them became closer settled and the production increased. The estimated annual losses varied from £319, in the case of the Nypo extension in the Southern Mallee, to £7,300, in connexion with the proposed Tallangatta to Cudgewa line to open up the fertile but sparsely-settled Upper Murray district. Included in the list was the line from Bairnsdale to Orbost, to assist in developing the extensive East Gippsland country. The estimated annual loss on that railway is £3,000. It was added that the total yearly deficiency arising out of the construction and operation of the 575 miles of new railways recommended by the Committee would probably reach £20,000. All the proposed lines were referred to the Committee by the Legislative Assembly "with the provision of a deficiency rate," and where the estimated revenue of a railway was likely to be insufficient to meet all the annual charges, including interest at 4 per cent. per annum on the capital expended in building and equipping the line, the Committee accordingly recommended the levying of such a rate. It was also stated that if, as a matter of policy, the railway deficiency rates were abolished, the question of making some permanent provision to meet these losses should engage the early attention of Parliament, otherwise the construction and operation of these non-paying lines would soon become a burden on the Railways Commissioners. The Committee again draws the attention of Parliament to the necessity of making some such permanent provision. At the same time, it should not be overlooked that, while the recently-constructed railways may, for a few years, show a loss to the Railway Department, there are other factors to be borne in mind in considering the monetary value of such undertakings to the State. On the other side of the ledger should be placed the increased settlement and production which invariably follows railway construction in a district where there are opportunities for such expansion. The building of a railway also enhances the value of both privately-owned and State properties. It therefore produces increased revenue to the State by the operation of the land tax, and, by enhancing the value of Crown township sites adjacent to stations on new lines, causes a substantial sum to be credited yearly to the Land Sales by Auction Fund when such sites are sold. By bringing cheap means of transport nearer to State forests a railway permits additional royalty fees to be charged on timber cut on Crown lands. Every man, woman, and child settled in Victoria means an addition of £1 5s. per head to the income of the State, obtained from the Customs and Excise revenue under the agreement with the Commonwealth. There are other factors operating in favour of a newly-constructed railway as a revenue producer to the State, but those referred to above should be sufficient to induce Parliament to make permanent provision for meeting the annual deficiencies which will occur for a few years in connexion with several of the railways recommended by the Committee.

RAILLESS ELECTRIC TROLLEY CARS.

8. When dealing in 1910 with the question of railway communication with West Brunswick, the Committee in its Report drew attention to the railless electric

trolley cars which had been in operation for some time in several European towns, and were about to be introduced into England, as both the Leeds and Bradford municipal councils were at that time favorable to trials of this means of public conveyance being made in those cities. It was suggested that as this system might be applicable to outer suburban areas of Melbourne, where the population was not dense, and cheap means of conveyance were not provided, the Agent-General should be asked to report upon the trial of these cars when operated under English conditions. Prior, however, to the departure of the Premier (the Honorable J. Murray, M.P.) for London in 1911 the Committee requested him to make inquiries as to the cost of the cars and overhead electric construction, fares charged, running cost per car mile, cost of maintenance, &c. Mr. Murray undertook to make the inquiries, and on his return to Melbourne he furnished the Committee with an interesting and instructive report on the subject. Since then, however, no proposal to serve the outer suburban areas by means of electric tramways or railless electric trolley cars has been referred to the Committee by the Legislative Assembly, and, consequently, it has had no opportunity of taking any further action concerning the use of these cars.

E. H. CAMERON,
Chairman.

Railways Standing Committee Room,
State Parliament House,
Melbourne, 11th June, 1912.