1915.

VICTORIA.

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS.

TWENTY-FIFTH 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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TWENTY-FIFTH GENERAL REPORT.

To His Excellency THE HONORABLE SIR ARTHUR LYULPH STANLEY, *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. From the date (12th June, 1914) of its last General Report to the dissolution of the Twenty-third Parliament on the 4th November, 1914, the Tenth Committee held 104 meetings, and examined 60 witnesses in connexion with various proposed railways and tramways. In making its inquiries during that period the Committee travelled 1,572 miles by rail, and 264 miles by road.

2. Between the 12th June, 1914, and the dissolution of Parliament the Committee prepared Reports (which were presented to the Legislative Assembly) on the following questions:—

Railway connexion with Serpentine and Durham Ox.
Hopetoun—Mildura lines connecting railway.
Railway connexion with Mornington Peninsula districts.
Railway connexion with the Tolmie district.
Railway connexion with Stanhope Closer Settlement Area.
Alberton to Won Wron railway.
Railway extension (Kulwin) in Eastern Mallee.
Thorpdale to The Cross Roads railway.
Lorquon to Yanac-a-Yanac railway.
Sandringham to Black Rock electric street railway.
South Melbourne electric tramway extension to St. Kilda West.
Burwood and Camberwell roads, Hawthorn, electric tramway.
Northcote and Preston electric tramway.

3. After being a Member of the Legislative Assembly for upwards of 40 years the Honorable E. H. Cameron retired from public life in November last. From 1894 to 1902, and again from 1909 to the recent dissolution of Parliament, Mr. Cameron filled the office of Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways. Mr. E. C. Warde, M.L.A., who was a member of the Committee from 1902 to 1914, also severed his association with the Committee on the dissolution of Parliament in November last. Both gentlemen rendered the Committee valuable service.

Railway Construction.

4. During the last six years Parliament has authorized the construction of the following broad-gauge railways on the recommendation of the Committee :—

Number of Act.	Name of Railway.	Length in Miles.	Estimated Cost.	Value of Rolling-stock included in Estimated Cost.
	Second Session 1909.		£	£
2217	*Eltham to Hurst's Bridge	6¾	44,240	1,240
2220	*Gheringhap to Maroona	100¾	425,160	6,890
2221	*Woolamai to Powlett Coal-field	14¼	67,500	..
2222	*Noradjuha to Toolondo	11¼	27,500	..
2223	†Bairnsdale to Orbost	60	391,360	4,650
2224	*Jeparit to Lorquon	14½	39,200	..
	Session 1910.			
2290	*Kow Plains to Murrayville	11¾	33,395	1,320
	Second Session 1911.			
2349	*Benalla to Tatong	18¼	61,788	8,630
2350	*Rushworth to Colbinabbin	12	41,280	2,310
2351	*Crowland to Navarre	22	79,220	1,485
	Session 1912.			
2414	†Tallangatta to Cudgewa	42½	299,448	1,485
2417	†Swan Hill to Piangil	27½	95,773	5,826
2418	*Chillingollah to Manangatang	18½	57,400	2,450
2419	*Sea Lake towards Pier-Millan (Nandaly)	17¾	61,271	3,325
2424	†Heywood to Mount Gambier (South Australia) ..	59	242,000	10,345
2424	†Murrayville to Pinnaroo (South Australia)	17	65,800	..
2433	†Elmore to Cohuna	57½	212,613	9,420
2434	†Hamilton to Cavendish	15¾	67,376	9,210
2441	*Rainbow towards Nypo (Yaapeet)	10¾	34,461	875
2442	†Linton to Skipton	12¾	67,100	2,100
	Session 1913–14.			
2502	†Cavendish to Toolondo	13¾	175,929	824
2504	†Neerim South to Toorongo River	14	115,844	3,325
	Session 1914.			
2535	Koo-wee-rup to McDonald's Track	30¾	183,235	11,074
2542	Alberton to Won Wron	12¼	54,264	..
2547	Lorquon to Yanac-a-Yanac	18½	53,500	..
	Total	669¾	£2,996,657	£86,784

* Open for traffic.
† Under construction.

5. Parliament, during the Session of 1914, also authorized the construction of a double-track electric street railway from Sandringham to Black Rock, a distance of 2¼ miles, at a cost of £46,500, including £6,500 for rolling-stock.

Railways Recommended.

6. The following broad-gauge railways have been recommended by the Committee, but their construction has not yet been authorized by Parliament :—

Name of Railway.	Length in Miles.	Estimated Cost.
		£
Bittern to Red Hill	9¾	40,000
Rushworth to Stanhope	11	39,400
Nandaly to Kulwin	19	60,000
Total	39¾	£139,400

7. In addition to the above lines, the Committee has recommended the construction of a railway branching off the Bairnsdale to Orbost line near Bruthen and ascending the Upper Tambo Valley as far as Tongiomunjie to serve the Omeo

district. The route of this extension is being surveyed to ascertain if a broad-gauge line can be built *viâ* Timbarra River and Ensay at a reasonable cost. The length of this railway will be upwards of 50 miles, and the probable cost about £300,000 or £400,000, according to the gauge and gradient adopted. It is intended to construct the line under the provisions of the *Developmental Railways Act* 1912.

Appointment of Eleventh Committee.

8. The present (Eleventh) Committee was appointed on the 15th December, 1914. Mr. R. F. Toutcher, M.L.A., and Mr. R. H. Solly, M.L.A., took the places of the Honorable E. H. Cameron and Mr. E. C. Warde, M.L.A., respectively. Mr. S. Barnes, M.L.A., was appointed Chairman of the Committee, and the Honorable D. Melville, M.L.C., Vice-Chairman.

9. Since its appointment the Committee has held 60 meetings and examined 76 witnesses in connexion with various proposed railways and the question of the suitability of the suggested site at South Melbourne for a wholesale and retail perishable produce market. In making these inquiries and inspecting routes of proposed railways the Committee has travelled 2,295 miles by rail, and 665 miles by road.

Questions before the Committee.

10. The following questions have been referred by the Legislative Assembly to the Committee for consideration :—

1. Railway extension in the Eastern Mallee, and the provision of an adequate supply of water for settlement purposes.
2. Railway extension in the Western Mallee, and the provision of an adequate supply of water for settlement purposes.
3. Railway connexion with Macarthur, Orford, and Yambuk.
4. Railway connexion with Staughton Vale Closer Settlement Area, and Balliang and Anakie.
5. Railway connexion with Callignee, Gormandale, Longford, Stradbroke, and Woodside.
6. Railway connexion with Strathbogie.
7. Railway connexion with Woorndoo, Caramut, Chatsworth, and Lake Bolac districts.
8. Railway connexion with the district lying between Marnoo, St. Arnaud, Navarre, and Glenorchy.
9. Railway connexion with Wando Vale, Dergholm, Harrow, Edenhope, and Booroopki.
10. Suitability of site at South Melbourne for a Perishable Produce Market, and railway connexion therewith.
11. Dookie and Yarrawonga lines connecting railway.
12. Railway connexion with Ardmona and Wyuna districts.
13. Timboon to Port Campbell developmental railway.
14. Railway connexion with Trida, Geachville, and West Tarwin districts.

Progress of Inquiries.

11. A few months ago the Committee inspected the country between Manangatang and Euston in the Eastern Mallee in connexion with the proposal to extend the railway as far as Bryden's Tank. Before, however, recommending that extension the Committee wishes to be assured that a supply of water for domestic and stock purposes will be available from some outside source for any farmers who may be settled in that area. With respect to railway extension in the Western Mallee the Committee has heard evidence at Rainbow and Yaapeet regarding a proposal to carry the Yaapeet railway

northwards towards Pine Plains. The Committee, however, desires to inspect the country from Patchewollock westwards to Pine Plains before coming to any decision. Reports on both these proposals will be presented to Parliament during the coming Session. All the local evidence has been heard concerning the questions of railway connexion with Macarthur, Staughton Vale Closer Settlement Area, Gormandale, and the country lying between Alberton and Sale, including Woodside and Stradbroke. The Railways Commissioners are preparing estimates of revenue and working expenses for suggested lines to serve these districts, and when they come to hand shortly, the Committee will be enabled to report to Parliament on these various proposals. Recently the Committee visited Euroa, Violet Town, Seymour, Ruffy, Caveat, and Strathbogie, and heard evidence concerning the question of railway connexion with Strathbogie. Information is being sought by the Committee from the Railway Department respecting the probable traffic over one of the suggested routes, and when the Traffic Officers of the Department have visited Strathbogie and collected the necessary figures the Committee will be in a position to inform Parliament of the result of its inquiries. Evidence has also been taken by the Committee during the past few weeks regarding the suitableness of a site at South Melbourne for a wholesale and retail perishable produce market and railway connexion therewith. The Report of the Committee on this matter will be presented to Parliament in the early part of the coming Session. Owing to the shortness of the Parliamentary recess the Committee has been unable to visit the Woorndoo, Marnoo, Edenhope, Dookie, Wyuna, Port Campbell, and Geachville districts to inquire into proposed railways to serve these places. However, the Committee will avail itself of every opportunity during the coming Session to inspect these districts on days when Parliament is not sitting. In accordance with the practice the Committee will visit the districts in the order of reference of the proposals to it by the Legislative Assembly.

Results of Railway Construction.

12. It was thought by the Committee when the State is faced with a railway deficit for the current year that the present is an opportune time to refer to the financial results of railway construction in Victoria during the last twenty years. Recently the Committee asked the Railways Commissioners to furnish it with a list of lines which had been constructed in that period on the recommendation of the Committee, and also with a return showing the financial results of such lines for the year ended 30th June, 1914. The Commissioners stated that the following railways had for some time past been regarded as payable undertakings, and, consequently, no figures as to their earnings and working expenses were taken out for the year mentioned above. They assumed, however, that the undermentioned lines gave profitable returns during the year 1913–14 :—

Line.	Date of Opening.	Length in Miles.	Cost.*
			£
Jumbunna–Outtrim	5.2.1896	2·40	28,330
Nathalia–Picola	15.12.1896	6·75	13,801
Birchip–Woomelang	18.9.1899	26·45	58,722
Jeparit–Rainbow	2.11.1899	18·47	34,275
Quambatook–Ultima	1.3.1900	30·31	51,516
Melbourne–Collingwood	21.10.1901	2·22	200,156
Lilydale–Warburton	13.11.1901	23·97	126,196
Woomelang–Mildura..	15.1.1903	110·15	283,208
Strathmerton towards Tocumwal	28.2.1905	8·20	17,087
Rupanyup–Marnoo	15.6.1909	15·38	29,107
Ultima–Chillingollah..	1.7.1909	20·14	31,149
Alexandra-road–Alexandra	28.10.1909	4·32	26,836
Nyora–Woolamai	9.5.1910	16·79	61,963
Woolamai–Powlett	9.5.1910	13·75	109,811
Mildura–White Cliffs	4.7.1910	6·92	17,267
Total	..	306·22	£1,089,424

* Exclusive of rolling-stock.

Non-paying Lines.

13. The Railways Commissioners reported that the railways which had been open for traffic for twelve months prior to the 30th June, 1914, and which were on the non-paying list, were as follow, the loss being given for the year ended 30th June, 1914:—

Line.	Date of Opening.	Length in Miles.	Cost.*	Loss for Year ended 30th June, 1914.
			£	£
Wangaratta–Whitfield (narrow gauge) ..	14.3.1899	30·49	39,688	2,307
Fern Tree Gully–Gembrook (narrow gauge) ..	18.12.1900	18·22	60,308	5,776
Colac–Beech Forest (narrow gauge)	1.3.1902	29·66	77,447	5,265
Heidelberg–Eltham..	5.6.1902	8·35	60,058	849
Strathmerton–Tocumwal Extension	9.7.1908	2·07	13,484	1,493†
Moe–Walhalla (narrow gauge)	3.5.1910	26·06	106,447	5,341
Beeac–Newtown	1.12.1910	35·85	104,578	2,644
Beech Forest–Crowe's (narrow gauge) ..	20.6.1911	14·24	42,820	2,313
Ouyen–Kow Plains	25.6.1912	56·39	130,922	4,760
Kow Plains–Murrayville	25.6.1912	11·48	29,736	983
Eltham–Hurst's Bridge	25.6.1912	6·64	42,258	2,193
Noradjuha–Toolondo	24.9.1912	11·24	26,739	1,185
Jeparit–Lorquon	10.12.1912	13·68	31,488	254
Total	..	264·37	£765,973	£35,363

* Exclusive of rolling-stock. † After providing for interest charges on Victorian expenditure on capital account only.

The Spring Vale Cemetery branch line (1·60 miles; cost, £9,278) is not yet paying.

Abolition of Local Railway Rates.

14. Local railway rates, which were charged on non-paying lines with the view of obtaining additional revenue and so assisting to reduce the loss on such railways, were removed by Act of Parliament as from the 1st July, 1914. It was estimated by the Railway Department that their abolition will cause a loss of revenue of from £10,000 to £15,000 a year. The above loss of £35,363 was for 1913–14, during which period local rates were in operation.

Narrow-gauge Railways.

15. It will be seen from the foregoing Table that out of a total loss of £35,000 for the year ended 30th June, 1914, £21,000 was attributed to the narrow-gauge railways. These lines, on the whole, not only failed to earn anything towards the interest payable on their capital expenditure of £326,000, but, in the aggregate, their revenue fell short of the working and maintenance expenses for that year by about £8,000. The losses on the narrow-gauge railways have been inquired into by the Railways Commissioners to ascertain whether any steps can be taken to improve the financial results of the lines. A return obtained some time ago by the Committee showed that in every instance, except the Walhalla line, the yearly receipts of the narrow-gauge railways exceeded the revenue estimated by the Railway Department for the first year following the opening of these lines. It, therefore, cannot be said that the traffic on such lines has not come up to expectations. The cost of working and maintaining these 2ft. 6in. railways has been much greater than was anticipated when their construction was recommended by the Committee and authorized by Parliament. The Railway Department is inquiring whether it would be possible to reduce the expense of haulage on narrow-gauge railways having steep gradients by employing more powerful locomotives. The principal obstacle, however, to an improvement in the financial results of the 2ft. 6in. railways is that sawn timber and firewood, which form the bulk of the freight carried over some of these lines, are conveyed at low rates. When their construction was recommended about fifteen or sixteen years ago it was stipulated that special rates for the carriage of goods over them should be charged, in the belief that this would cause

increased revenue to be obtained and so lessen the loss. These charges were imposed at the outset. But the sawmillers and others interested in the timber and firewood trades waited on the Railways Commissioners and stated that they would have to discontinue operations in the areas adjacent to narrow-gauge railways if those charges were continued, as they could not compete successfully with sawmillers and firewood cutters who were served by broad-gauge lines on which special rates were not charged. Neither had the latter to pay the cost of transferring their timber and firewood from narrow-gauge trucks to broad-gauge ones at the break-of-gauge stations. Moreover, competition with Tasmanian sawmillers had become keener, owing to the establishment of the Commonwealth and the removal of duties on timber imported into Victoria from that island State. These representations led to the local or special rates on sawn timber and firewood carried over narrow-gauge lines being removed.

Losses on Broad-gauge Railways.

16. With respect to the loss of £1,493 in 1913–14 on the Strathmerton-Tocumwal extension, it was necessary to make that short extension across the Murray into the township of Tocumwal, which is on the New South Wales side of that river, so as to junction the Victorian railway system at that point with the south-western lines of the neighbouring State. There was delay on the New South Wales side in extending the railway from Finley to Tocumwal, 11 miles. But the two railways have now been linked up at Tocumwal, and the loss stated ought to be largely diminished by the expected flow of traffic from Riverina across this connecting railway into Victoria. It was anticipated that there would be a loss on the Beeac-Newtown line when the Gheringhap-Maroona railway was made bisecting that line at Cressy, and thus affording a much shorter route to the port of Geelong than by way of Beeac. The Committee recommended the construction of the Beeac-Newtown proposal prior to the Gheringhap-Maroona route being submitted to Parliament. In, however, making that recommendation the Committee said—"While the Committee was precluded by its Act (section 8 of Act No. 1350) from considering in any way the proposed direct railway from the Western District Plains to the port of Geelong, it feels it ought not to conclude this Report (on the Newtown and Beeac railway) without expressing the opinion that the effect which the proposed direct line, if made, will have on the receipts of the Beeac to Newtown railway should receive attention." In 1913–14 the territory served by the Ouyen-Kow Plains railway suffered from a dry season and a partial failure of the wheat crop. The loss on this line for 1912–13 was £2,000 less than that shown in the Table for the year ended 30th June, 1914. As regards the Eltham-Hurst's Bridge line, the revenue received last year slightly exceeded the estimated receipts when this extension was recommended. The working expenses, however, were much larger than were anticipated, due largely to the desire of the Railways Commissioners to assist the fruit-growing industry—which is the mainstay of the district—and also to encourage the passenger traffic, especially at week-ends and on all public holidays, as this picturesque valley promises to soon become a popular resort for excursionists if that traffic is catered for.

Railway Construction and Production.

17. Attached to this Report is an Appendix prepared by the Government Statist at the instance of the Committee. It compares the mileage of railways constructed in Victoria; also the area under cultivation, excluding land in fallow; and the agricultural production, in tonnage, in 1885–6 with that of 1900–1 and 1913–14. Particulars are given of the tonnage of goods and live stock carried over the Victorian railways during those years and of the number of cattle and sheep in this State in the years 1885–6, 1900–1, and 1913–14 respectively. The Appendix will be found to contain interesting information. The reason for taking 1885–6 was that it was just prior to the vigorous railway construction policy of the "boom" period. That year was also a fair season, though the wheat crop was but a moderate one. On the other hand, however, the yields of other cereals were good ones. The season of 1900–1 was also a fair average one. Last season (1913–14) was taken because it would be of little value making a comparison with the present drought year, when the wheat and other crops have been failures. For the purposes of comparison, land in fallow had to be excluded from the area under cultivation. Only a comparatively small acreage was under

fallow in 1885–6, whereas in recent years the area has been large, owing to the general adoption of the dry-farming system in the northern and Wimmera wheat-growing belts. The yields of cereals and fruits, as well as other crops, were calculated on a tonnage basis for the purpose of a ready comparison.

18. It will be seen from the Appendix that between 1885–6 and 1900–1 the mileage of railways constructed in Victoria advanced by 90 per cent., whilst during that period the area under cultivation, excluding land in fallow, increased by only 67 per cent. This shows that an increase in cultivation does not at the outset follow in the same ratio as the additions made to our railways, and that building such lines with the view of encouraging production or in advance of settlement does not, in Victoria, meet with the same response that a similar policy caused in Canada, where cultivation or production was made a condition of the occupancy of country lands served by railways. In recent years such a condition has prevailed in the Mallee. All settlers in that part of this State are required to have one-fourth of their area under cultivation within two years of their occupancy of the holding. Whilst the area in Victoria under cultivation during the period from 1885–6 to 1900–1 increased by 67 per cent., the total agricultural production was but 47 per cent. more. In the period from 1900–1 to 1913–14, however, there was a large increase—77 per cent.—in the production of the State owing to the general adoption of fallowing and better agricultural methods prevailing, as well as to the widespread use of artificial manures during that time. This better system of farming not only increased the agricultural production in Victoria, but it was one of the factors in making the Victorian railways a profitable undertaking. The mileage of railways constructed in Victoria from 1900–1 to 1913–14 advanced by only 16 per cent., whilst during that period the area under cultivation increased by 41 per cent. The position now is that cultivation has more than overtaken the rapid railway construction policy of the "boom" years. The area in 1913–14 under cultivation per mile of railway open for traffic was 1,187 acres. In 1885–6 it was 1,114 acres, whilst in 1900–1 it fell to 977 acres. The agricultural production per mile of railway open in 1885–6 represented 665 tons. In 1900–1 it fell to 514 tons, although the production of the State had increased during that period. But so also had the mileage of railways constructed, and this led to a reduction in the tonnage of agricultural production per mile of railway open. In 1913–14 the agricultural production of this State reached 785 tons per mile of railway constructed. It will, therefore, be seen that railway construction has a decided influence on agricultural production, but the response, as regards acreage put under cultivation, does not follow in the same ratio where a vigorous railway construction policy is pursued. Broadly speaking, under existing circumstances in Victoria, outside of the Mallee and the irrigation areas with their small holdings where cultivation or production is either insisted on or is necessary to gain a livelihood, it may be said that, on the average, it takes much longer than was generally expected to obtain sufficient freightage from districts having agricultural lands to make the railways traversing them payable concerns.

Railways for Defence Purposes.

19. Recently Commonwealth Ministers have referred publicly to the need of railway construction being looked at from the stand-point of defence purposes as well as the land settlement and development aspect. In April, 1908, when the subject of railway extension from Bairnsdale through Eastern Gippsland to the New South Wales border was before the Victorian Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways, it was thought by that body that as this would be an alternative railway route between Sydney and Melbourne such a connexion might be of value for defence purposes, especially as the line would run somewhat parallel with the coast. The Committee therefore wrote to the then Honorable the Prime Minister asking if this proposed railway would be of sufficient value for defence purposes to cause the Commonwealth Parliament to vote a sum of money towards the construction of the line. The reply received was—"The Defence Department states that, generally speaking, any railway extension is useful for defence purposes, but since Eastern Gippsland offers no particular attraction to an enemy, and no troops are raised in that part of the Commonwealth, the proposed railway will afford no special advantage in the immediate future from a defence stand-point. There are, therefore, no reasons why this line should be regarded as a special case. I am to add that the Minister of Defence is of opinion that it would

be out of the question to ask the Commonwealth Parliament to vote money for such purposes." Again, about two years ago, when the question of railway extension in Mornington Peninsula was before the Committee, it was thought by that body that the construction of a broad-gauge railway starting from near the Naval Base at Western Port and ascending the hills above Dromana, overlooking the eastern exit from the South Channel, might be of value to the Defence authorities, as it might enable heavy guns and men to be readily moved from that base to a commanding position on those hills in the event of the forts at Port Phillip Heads being attacked. But on the Commonwealth Government being written to a reply was received that the Military Board did not consider the proposed railway from the Mornington-Stony Point lines to Flinders of sufficient military value to justify the expenditure of Commonwealth funds on it.

SAMUEL BARNES,
Chairman.

Railways Standing Committee Room,
State Parliament House,
Melbourne, 7th April, 1915.

APPENDIX.

RAILWAYS, CULTIVATION, AND LIVE STOCK IN VICTORIA, 1885–6, 1900–1, AND 1913–14.

—		1885–6.	1900–1.	1913–14.	Percentage Increase between— 1885–6 and 1900–1.	1900–1 and 1913–14.
Railways constructed, at commencement of year	miles	1,676	3,186	3,700	90	16
Area under cultivation (excluding land in fallow)	acres	1,867,496	3,114,132	4,391,321	67	41
Area under cultivation per mile of railway	,,	1,114	977	1,187	–12*	21
Agricultural production—Total ..	tons	1,114,937	1,639,129	2,905,565	47	77
,, ,, per mile of railway	,,	665	514	785	–23*	53
Goods and live stock carried—Total ..	,,	2,202,206	3,381,860	5,816,088	54	72
,, ,, ,, per mile of railway	,,	1,314	1,061	1,572	–19*	48
Number of cattle in Victoria ..	..	1,290,790	1,602,384	1,528.553	24	–5*
,, sheep ,, ..	..	10,681,837	10,841,790	12,113,682	1	12

* Decrease.

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