

command was not enough to enable them to perform all the work they desire to do, think that they have sufficiently explained the position.

E. G. PILCHER, Secretary.

No. 6.

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to the RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS.

The Railway Commissioners.

19th June, 1891.

RE renewal boilers ordered from England: Your memorandum of the 11th ultimo on the above-mentioned subject came to hand during my absence from Wellington, and has remained unanswered until now, owing partly to my continued absence, and partly to pressure of departmental and Parliamentary business since my return.

As regards the larger matter of making provision for works on opened lines generally, to which you allude in the first portion of your memorandum now under reply, it is probably not necessary to say anything further at present, as since the date of your memorandum other correspondence has taken place with you on this subject, which will probably lead to a satisfactory solution of that difficulty being arrived at.

Your reply to the question asked in the second paragraph of the memorandum from this office of the 6th ultimo appears to have been written under a misapprehension of the question asked. You stated in your memorandum of the 28th April last that "although the Commissioners obtain from colonial contractors such work as it is found suitable to get—as, for instance, girder-work—they do not think it advisable to get locomotive-boiler work done by tender in the colony;" and the question asked in the memorandum of the 6th ultimo, already referred to in reference to this, was "as to the grounds on which the Commissioners object to have locomotive-boiler work executed in the colony." Your reply does not seem to answer this question at all, and I would therefore again ask you to be so good as to state why the Commissioners "do not think it advisable to get locomotive-boiler work done by tender in the colony."

Your remarks in reference to the contract for the construction of sundry locomotives by a southern firm of engineers do not seem to affect the question now under discussion. The point we are endeavouring to elucidate is as to whether the locomotive renewal boilers, which are the subject of this correspondence, could or could not have been satisfactorily manufactured by private engineering firms in the colony if the Government railway workshops were too fully employed at the time to undertake the work. It is difficult, therefore, to see how the question of the makers of those engines, being allowed to import parts of them in a more or less manufactured state, can affect this question, unless it was the boilers that were imported ready made, and this I do not understand you to state was the case. I have to thank you for the information contained in your memorandum to the effect that the Agent-General invited tenders for the boilers ordered, and have now to ask you to kindly let me know whose tender was accepted for them, and the price at which they were contracted to be supplied.

I also note your remarks that you "have not as yet refused to furnish the Government with information as to work that is in hand in the railway workshops, nor as to the capacity of the shops, nor as to the number of employes engaged therein," but I further observe that you still omit to answer queries Nos. 3 and 4 contained in my memorandum of the 21st April last, or to give any reasons for refusing to answer them, as you were asked to be good enough to do in the Assistant Under-Secretary's memorandum of the 6th ultimo. I have now to direct your attention to these queries again, and to express the hope that you will be able to see your way to furnish explicit answers to them, but that should you not be able so to do, you will at least let me have some statement for your reasons for refusing to answer them.

R. J. SEDDON, Minister for Public Works.

P.S.—I shall be glad if you will kindly let me have a reply at your early convenience.

No. 7.

The RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works.

26th June, 1891.

RE additions to opened lines:—The Railway Commissioners have the honour to reply to your letter of the 19th instant, and to thank the Government for its intimation that it is proposed to ask Parliament to vote the £40,000 required for additions to opened lines, although, until the money is appropriated and due provision made for the various requirements, the difficulty can scarcely be regarded as solved. The Commissioners hope, however, that this result may be finally compassed.

As regards the boilers which have been imported from England the experience of the Government on the occasion alluded to, when they accepted a tender for ten small locomotives to be built in the colony, was that, although the engine cost from 40 to 50 per cent. more than the imported article of superior build, it took three years to complete the contract; and as the duty is imposed on the Commissioners of insuring that the railways are maintained in a state of safety and efficiency, and that proper economy is exercised, they could not see their way to deal with the matter satisfactorily other than has been done.

You appear to imply that the information given to you respecting the manufacture of boilers in the colony is not relevant. The Commissioners' remarks were in reply to the paragraph in your letter of the 6th May, wherein it was stated that you were informed that "locomotive boilers, and other portions all complete," had been made in the colony. Whoever gave you such information misled you seriously, and the Commissioners desired to place you in possession of correct information, as the results then obtained had a very important bearing on the Commissioners' action.

Appended will be found a list of tenders for the boilers referred to which you ask for.