

The questions Nos. 3 and 4, in your letter of the 21st April, do not appear to be relevant to the subject. They, moreover, appear to be in the nature of a cross-examination, implying a doubt as to the good faith of the Commissioners' previous communications, and tacitly assuming that the Minister occupies the place of a professional railway expert to whom the Commissioners are accountable, and who is to be the judge of the technical work of the department. As the Government Railways Act expressly forbids the exercise of such functions by the Minister, the Commissioners concluded that it would be unnecessary to reply to these questions.

JAMES MCKERROW, Chief Commissioner.

LOCOMOTIVE BOILER TENDERS.—(Working Railways Order, 12th July, 1890.)

Name of Firm.	Amount.		
	£	s.	d.
1. Neilson and Co.	1,820	0	0
2. Nasmyth, Wilson, and Co.	2,103	0	0
3. Vulcan Foundry Company	1,720	0	0
4. Stephenson and Co., Robert	1,972	0	0
5. Beyer, Peacock, and Co.	2,100	0	0

Vulcan Foundry Company's tender accepted.

No. 8.

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

The Railway Commissioners.

30th June, 1891.

RE renewal boilers ordered from England: I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your memorandum of the 26th instant headed "Additions to opened lines," but being a reply to my memorandum of the 19th instant on the above-mentioned subject.

In reference thereto I would, in the first place, point out that "no intimation that it is proposed to ask Parliament to vote £40,000 required for additions to opened lines," and for which you express your thanks to the Government, was contained in my memorandum. It is important that this apparent misapprehension of the terms of that memorandum should be corrected without delay.

I have to thank you for the information supplied as to the tenders received by the Agent-General for the boilers in question, but to point out that you do not appear to have replied to my query as to "Why the Commissioners 'do not think it advisable to get locomotive boiler-work done by tender in the colony?'" unless the paragraph in your memorandum as to Messrs. Scott Brothers' contract for ten engines having occupied three years in execution is intended to be a reply thereto. As, however, it is doubtful, to say the least of it, whether this is intended to be a reply to the question asked or not, I should be glad if the Commissioners would favour me with a further and more explicit reply on the subject as soon as possible.

As regards questions Nos. 3 and 4 in my memorandum of the 21st April last, the asking of which the Commissioners think implies that the Minister for Public Works assumes that he occupies the position of a professional railway expert to whom the Commissioners are accountable, and who is to be the judge of the technical work of the Department, I merely remark that no such thought was in my mind when I asked the question. My position in the matter is simply this: that as it will devolve upon me, as Minister for Public Works, to take charge of the railway estimates when they are under discussion in Parliament, it is absolutely necessary that I should be placed in possession of full information on the subjects referred to, so that I may be in a position to answer the inquiries in reference thereto which are almost certain to be made by members of the House when the estimates are under consideration.

In view of this explanation I trust that the Commissioners will no longer hesitate to furnish the information asked for.

R. J. SEDDON,
Minister for Public Works.

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