

APPENDIX I.

TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE INSTITUTION OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY OF VICINAL RAILWAYS.

I.

Minister of Finance, and Minister of Agriculture, Industry, and Public Works.

LAW ON THE VICINAL RAILWAYS, REVISED AND AMENDED.

[24th June, 1885.]

LEOPOLD II, KING OF THE BELGIANS.

Greetings.

PARLIAMENT has adopted, and we sanction, the following :—

Article I.

The Government is authorized to approve the statutes of a society constituted at Brussels under the name of "The National Society of Vicinal Railways," as they are annexed to the present law.

Article II.

The vicinal railways are conceded by Royal Proclamation.

They are conceded to the National Society of Vicinal Railways.

Nevertheless they may be conceded to other societies or private individuals if within a year of their request for a concession the National Society has not made a similar request, or has not, within the time fixed by the Government of receiving a concession, constructed the line.

Article III.

No concession is made without consulting Communal Councils and permanent provincial delegates.

All concessions are preceded by an inquiry into the utility of the enterprise, the route, and the proposed tariff.

Article IV.

No concession is accorded to the National Society unless it is assured of the subscription of sufficient shares to secure the construction and satisfactory opening of that line for working.

Article V.

Concessions are accorded to the National Society for so long as it endures, and to other societies or individuals for special periods fixed by the special Proclamation, and in no case exceeding ninety years.

Article VI.

Tariffs are fixed by the National Society under Government approval. Nevertheless Government has power to require the raising or forbid the lowering of any tariff.

Article VII.

Government has the right to control all operations of the society, and with that object to demand all information and returns. It may oppose the carrying-out of any measure which in its opinion may be contrary to law, statutes, or the interests of the State.

Article VIII.

Government controls the policy of the vicinal railways. It may swear in the employees of the concessionaires and confer upon them all the powers and duties of ordinary police in accordance with regulations made under laws of the 15th June, 1843, concerning railway police. It may impose upon the concessionaires in the public interest, either general, provincial, or communal, the obligations and free transport, or transport at reduced rates, which it judges required (?).

The National Society must conform to the law of the 22nd May, 1878, in connection with the employment of the Flemish language in administrative notices.

Article IX.

The intervention of the State as a subscriber in the proceedings of the National Society must not exceed half the nominal capital of each line, unless by special Act.

Article X.

Government is authorized to guarantee to third parties, on conditions determined by it, the interest and sinking fund on the debentures issued by the National Society, representing the annuities due by the communes, the provinces, and the State.

The commitments of the State, as a guarantor, shall not exceed the sums fixed by law.

Article XI.

The concessions of the society are not taxable by provinces or communes; it is exempt from license fees, or any taxes, rates, or tolls for its construction-work directly appertaining to the building or working of the vicinal railways.