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*Colonial Secretary's Office,
Perth, 7th July, 1882.*

HIS Excellency the Governor has been pleased to direct the publication of the following correspondence, relative to a new Loan for Public Works, for general information.

By His Excellency's Command,
GIFFORD,
Colonial Secretary.

Governor to Secretary of State.

No. 72.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

MY LORD,

Government House, Perth, 12th May, 1882.

Referring to previous correspondence* on the subject of the Eastern Railway Extension, as also to recent Despatches in which I have reported that the Finances of the Colony have been completely restored, I have now the honor to express to Your Lordship on behalf of the Colony our earnest hope that Her Majesty's Government may feel justified in sanctioning a further Loan for the completion of the Railway to York; for the improvement of Jetty accommodation in connection with the Railway at Fremantle; and for the construction of an Overland Telegraph Line to Roebourne.

2. For these three works a further loan of £260,000 will be required. The sum is a large one, but it is not, in my opinion, more than the Colony in its present circumstances can afford to borrow, and I hope to satisfy Your Lordship that the works enumerated are of such urgent importance as to justify the raising of the money by loan for the purpose of carrying them out.

3. The completion of the Railway to York is a work of absolute necessity. The section now under construction will only carry the line to a point in the centre of the iron-stone ranges about 25 miles east of Guildford, and it is obvious that until the Railway is carried through to the agricultural districts, which it is destined to open up and develop, it will fail to accomplish, to anything like a full extent, the objects which we have had in view in constructing it. From

the end of the section now under construction to York, viâ Spencer's Brook, the route desired by the Legislative Council, is a distance of 48 miles and 16 chains, and the Acting Commissioner estimates the cost of the extension, including equipment, at £192,350, being at the rate of £3,990 19s. 3d. per mile. For full particulars as to the route and estimated cost of the 3rd section, I would beg to refer Your Lordship to the accompanying report (Enclosure A†) from the Acting Commissioner of Railways, which appears to have been framed with considerable care and to furnish all necessary information on the subject. I may add that the arguments in favor of the deviation viâ Spencer's Brook appear to me unanswerable, and as the Legislative Council has expressed itself in favor of the deviation, I beg leave to recommend it to Your Lordship's favorable consideration. A Minute on this point addressed to me by the Colonial Secretary (Enclosure B) is forwarded for Your Lordship's perusal. Lord Gifford puts forward good arguments in support of the proposed deviation viâ Spencer's Brook, and his estimate of the increased earnings of the longer line—framed, I believe, without any reference to the Acting Commissioner of Railways—accords exactly with Mr. Mason's estimate, both authorities being agreed that an addition of £12,000 a year to the receipts may be expected on account of the close proximity of the proposed line to the Northam and Newcastle districts.

4. Before I quit the subject of the extension of the Railway to York, I should like to point out to Your Lordship the importance of beginning the third section without any such break as intervened between the completion of the first section and the commencement of the second. If tenders are called for while the work of the second section proceeds, we are much more likely—with competent contractors on the spot fully provided with means and plant—to let the extension at a favorable rate than if we have again to call for tenders in the neighboring colonies at a time when there is well known to be no one in this Colony capable of undertaking such a work.

5. I will next allude to the proposed extension of the Fremantle Jetty, as this is a work which is closely connected with the Railway. The proposal is that the Jetty should be lengthened some 400 feet at a cost of about £10,000, so as to enable vessels of a heavier tonnage to come alongside, when, by running the Railway trucks to the end of the Jetty, the Railway Department would be able to take delivery of goods and merchandise direct from the shipping, and would speedily monopolise the whole of the carrying traffic, a considerable portion of which is now carried on by small steamers on the river. A Minute (Enclosure C) from the Commissioner of Railways upon this subject is enclosed, and I think supplies all the information which at the present time will be required in considering it. Of course it will have to be ascertained whether the present Jetty is strong enough to bear the Railway traffic; also what depth of water would be procurable at (say) 400 feet seaward from the head of the present Jetty. These are points of detail which will have to be carefully considered before the work can be undertaken. My present object is merely to ascertain whether, if, on examination, all circumstances are found to be favorable to the undertaking, Your Lordship, from a financial point of view, will be prepared to sanction it.

6. The important question of the Roebourne Telegraph Line has already been brought to your notice, and in Your Lordship's Despatch No. 95, of the 18th November last, you were pleased to say that you would be prepared to sanction a proposal which was then under consideration for carrying out the work on the Land Grant System. That proposal, I am sorry to say, has so far led to no practical result, and I find there is now a strong general feeling in favor of the work being carried out by the Government by means of borrowed capital. That the work would contribute to a more rapid development of the Northern Districts of the Colony is indisputable, while from a political point of view the proposed undertaking is one of the greatest importance. The views of the Legislative Council upon the subject were clearly expressed in their Resolution of the 6th September, 1880, of which the following is an extract:—

“The isolated position of the North-West District, and its growing importance, more especially when viewed in connection with the early settlement of the vast extent of new country on the Fitzroy River recently discovered by Mr.

† The Enclosures will appear *in extenso* in the Papers prepared for Council.

“Alexander Forrest, renders it highly desirable that Telegraphic Communication should be established between Roebourne, the principal town in the North-West District, and Northampton, the farthest Northern point of our telegraph system. The total length of this line is 700 miles, and its cost has been estimated at £39,200. The only way of reaching this district is by small sailing coasters, the length of whose voyages are very uncertain; and long intervals sometimes intervene without any communication with it. The exports from the district are very considerable in value, and the inhabitants contribute largely to the revenue; and the Council is of opinion that Telegraphic Communication would tend to their advantage and that of the Colony at large.”

It was in response to the above representation that Your Lordship was pleased to sanction the carrying out of this work on the Land Grant System. That scheme having practically failed, and the finances of the Colony being now completely restored, I would urge that I may be authorised to include the necessary amount, say £50,000, in the next Loan Bill, unless between the present time and the next Session of Council the proposal to carry out the work on the Land Grant System should be revived in a practical form.

7. An interesting and useful report (Enclosure D), prepared by the Colonial Secretary and Superintendent of Telegraphs, on the subject of the proposed telegraph line to Roebourne, is attached. Although the report was drawn up with special reference to the proposed construction of the work on the land grant system, the main features of the paper apply equally to the form which the question has now assumed, and it will, I am sure, be read with interest by Your Lordship.

8. I have now, in conclusion, to submit to Your Lordship some details with reference to the finances of the Colony, which will, I trust, enable you to feel justified in sanctioning the additional loan required for the works enumerated in this Despatch. For this purpose I think I cannot do better than forward a Minute (Enclosure E), prepared by the Colonial Secretary, from which it will be seen that we can, with comparative ease, make all necessary provision for the interest and sinking fund required, and I believe I need not now enter further into this branch of the subject than to promise, on behalf of the Government and Legislature, that should Your Lordship be pleased to sanction the additional loan, due provision will be made by the Legislature to meet the increased charges which will thereby be thrown upon the Colony.

9. I may add that our present rate of indebtedness per head of population is £17 4s., which compares favorably with the rate of indebtedness per head in the other Australasian Colonies, and that there is probably no Colony where the exigencies of taxation press less heavily on the people than they do in Western Australia.

10. The Legislative Council will meet in July, and I shall therefore be much obliged if Your Lordship will communicate to me your decision by telegraph. Should you desire it, I will take care that the Bills introduced to give effect to the recommendations contained in this Despatch are passed with suspending clauses, in order that should you require further information on any point the same may be furnished before the measures are finally assented to. My object in now submitting the question to Your Lordship is that a Session may not be lost, and that we may, subject to your approval, be in a position to commence the third section of the Railway immediately on the completion of the second section. In the event of your not feeling justified in sanctioning the whole of the works enumerated, I may mention that in my opinion, and in the opinion of the general public, they stand in the following order of importance:—

1. Extension Eastern Railway,
2. Roebourne Telegraph,
3. Extension Fremantle Jetty.

11. Since writing the foregoing portions of this Despatch, it has occurred to me that it would be satisfactory to Your Lordship to receive from the members of the Legislative Council at present in Perth an assurance that they endorse the undertaking which I have given on

their behalf that if the loan now asked for be sanctioned due provision will be made for the increased charges which will thereby be thrown upon the Colony. I therefore communicated upon the subject with Mr. Steere, the leader of the elected members, who at once convened a meeting of his colleagues, and has handed to me, in reply, the Resolution (Enclosure F) of which a copy is enclosed.

12. Lastly, I think I ought to add that if the loan now asked for be approved the Colony will have arrived at the full extent of its borrowing powers for the present, and that, in my judgment, no further expenditure of borrowed money should be contemplated until we shall have tested the effect of the reproductive works which we are now undertaking, and which I have every expectation will lead in due time to an increase of population, wealth, and importance.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM C. F. ROBINSON.

The Right Honorable the Earl of Kimberley,
&c., &c., &c.

TELEGRAMS.

Governor to Secretary of State.

19th June, 1882.

My Despatch seventy-two. Telegraph Scheme on Land Grant System finally abandoned by settlers.

(Signed)

GOVERNOR.

Secretary of State to Governor.

6th July, 1882.

Loan approved.

(Signed)

KIMBERLEY.