

EAST AFR. PROT

17312

17312

REC
RCC APR 20

CRTHEY, SIR, E.

POWELL WOOD PROCESS.

1920

2nd April

last previous Paper.

Would like more recent information from Australia re---
Considers more likely to be successful in highlands than
on Tana River and that Mr Pritchard be invited to E.A.P.
to study conditions.

2731

*This was held up for Mr. ... then by
Mr. Pritchard's letter to Major Thornton
attached. I saw him on Tuesday
at Major Thornton's request. See
letter of 21 April attached.*

*Major Egan's name came into
the discussion through Mr. E. North's
reference to the Eldama Forest - Mr.
Pritchard asked if it would be
any case approaching him?
I saw no harm in it & said that
I thought that Major Egan
was the sort of man who would
~~investigate the forest~~
have a reason as to why for the
interests of the balance ...*

subsequent Paper.

20219

was Mr. Pritchard's chief
objection to floating a warranty.
Points which emerged in the
discussion were:—

(1) Ref. a warranty. The Air Ministry
could give evidence. The process will
show in one month wood which
would take a year in the other.

(2) Dry rot - said to have been dealt
with in this context with 100 of
12 months ago. Mr. Green, the
Secretary of the Powell Process
Institute (715 Salisbury House,
London Walk, E.C.2. Tel. Central
60912) could satisfy us.

(3) [A hint of water, as wood sleepers have
been said to be badly charred through
water from the pipes] - Foralized
sleepers are practically incombustible -
because there is no air in them.

(4) Guarantee. If the Govt will
indicate what wood they are
to use and will let Mr. Pritchard
cut it in his own way, he will
res. for any sleepers which
require renewal within
15 years.

(2) On my writing out that a life of
15 years (we not proved in practice), as
compared with a life of 30 years for
steel sleepers costing ⁽³⁷⁾ twice as much,
did not seem a specially good 439

- beginning for the Govt, he said that
- (1) steel sleepers do not last
30 years
 - (2) they greatly increase the weight
burden of rolling stock - and produce the
discomfort of travel
 - (3) they increase the requirements of any
accidents which may happen.

I do not think that, as the matter
is left by the Post. authorities,
we are called upon to collect
evidence in favour of the process.
It is for us to be decided before it.
It is not going to Portugal
to A. yet.

Mr. Green

5015.
22.4.20.

L.A.P.

Powell Wood Process for Sleepers

77 Carlisle Mansions S.W. 1

2nd April 1920.

440

17312

Sir, I have the honor to acknowledge your letter No. 1731/1920, of 20th ult. ^{RECEIVED} ^{AT 10.30} and enclosures, on the subject of the possible introduction of the Powell Wood Process into the East Africa Protectorate, for the production of sleepers in particular.

2. Not only will some 600,000 new sleepers, (which, on account of the expense of iron ones, must be wooden,) be soon required for new lines, but a large quantity are required annually for replacement of old and worn as sleepers.

3. It appears from his correspondence that sleepers treated by this process will resist the insects made by white ants, which is our chief trouble in Africa: it is not proved that they will resist fungus attacks, or definitely that the wood is quickly seasoned.

4. I should like to get more recent information from Australia: perhaps the Crown Agents could get this? I agree with the Acting Governor that further investigation of local conditions, of which Mr. Bitchard does not seem to be cognizant and which are very different to those prevailing in Australia, are necessary, before any contract is entered into or company floated.

5. I think any such proposition is more likely to be successful if established in the Highlands of the Protectorate than at Keppis or on the tana: at the Eldama forest, for instance, good timber is plentiful on the spot, the climate is suitable and healthy for European workmen, and the branch Railway to the Plateau is to traverse the District.

6. I agree with Mr. Batterscombe that we should, after securing, adopt the most economical method of treating timber & render it durable.

7. Meanwhile, I suggest that Mr. Bitchard be invited to visit the Protectorate and study conditions on the spot. If he can satisfy us of the efficiency of his treatment when applied to local wood for local purposes, we could, no doubt, come to terms with him as to a concession for cutting timber on a Royalist basis to supply sleepers for our Railways - I think ^{such} ~~such~~ should be given every encouragement, then, to float a Company: personally I will give him all the help I can. I have the pleasure to be, Sir, your obedient servant, ^{W. G. B. P.}

copy of letter to the Govt. S.W. 1

Downing Street,

5th November, 1919.

Sir,

441

Pritchard
1917.
25th May.
15th June.
7th Oct.
Pritchard
Oct.
Part IV.

I have the honour to transmit to you the accompanying copy of correspondence on the subject of Mr. Pritchard's proposal to introduce the Powell & Coys' process into the West Africa Protectorate, and of a scheme for establishing a factory for the manufacture of railway sleepers and the distillation of wood in order to develop the resources of the vast forests of the Protectorate.

2. You will see from the publications accompanying the correspondence that the process has to have met with considerable success in India, Australia and to offer good expectation of favourable results in East Africa.

3. I shall be glad if you will consider the matter in consultation with your technical advisers and inform me with your views as to the possible adoption of the process in East Africa and as to the establishment of a factory such as Mr. Pritchard proposes in his letter of October 14th either as a Government undertaking or as a concession to Mr. J.R. Pritchard.

4. I have to request that the volume of the enclosures to the letter from the Agent General for Western Australia ^{which} are sent in original, may be returned with your reply.

I have etc.,

(Sgd) WINNER.

Major General
E. Northey, F.R.S., C.B.

etc., etc., etc.

David Thomson Gen. Mgr. 20/11/20

Parcell Wood Process pp. below, you
will notice that there has been difficulty in
getting them together.

442

1. We undertook to consult the East
Africa S.A.P. Mr. Pyffe is the
Chief Forestry Officer of Uganda &
naturally did not come into it. (The
S.A.P. manage the railways in
Uganda).
2. I am inclined to agree that the
East. P. Officers are a little overworked
but I regretfully with the floods
this (no 12731) that we could
try a big in a hole.
3. You will notice that Sir E. Northey
would welcome a sound process of
the kind but considers that Mr
Pritchard should go out & look at
the possibilities of developing
business: that he should work
the process entirely in a way East
African (see esp. last para of 20
53186) & that Sir E. Northey
would give him all the help he
could.

This

c/o Mrs. Poad

Pier Parade,

DEAL.

18th April, 1920.

Major Thornton,

It is necessary to offer an explanation of my reason for sending you the enclosed extract from a letter written to me by the Secretary of the Powell Wood Process.

When at Mombassa, in April, 1914, I put before certain business men there (who knew East Africa and Uganda well) my proposals regarding the establishment of the Powell Process in those Protectorates, their unanimous advice was, not to approach anybody in the country itself, but to go direct to the Colonial Office. The reason advanced for not bringing my proposals to Nairobi was, that "the officials of the country would simply turn them down if they looked like entailing any extra work." That was the considered opinion of men who were in a position to know. I acted on their advice and left the Protectorate.

As the War broke out ten weeks later, I had to drop my East Africa proposals altogether, until Lord Milner became Secretary of State for the Colonies, when, as you are aware, I brought them to your notice in the first week of February, 1919.

After months of investigation by the Crown Agents for the Colonies, Sir Herbert Read personally assured me, on 30th December 1919, that a dispatch had been sent to the Acting Governor of British East Africa on the 4th of November, to enable him to consult his technical advisers regarding my proposals.

At that interview, I gave Sir Herbert material for a second dispatch, which was doubtless forwarded without delay.

From what I can gather, it appears to me that the Colonial Office is of opinion that my proposals should be adopted but cannot "ram them down the throats of the Governors concerned". I accept that explanation, but submit that the Governors could take their decisions more rapidly.

I believe that a dispatch was sent to the Governor of the Gold Coast towards the end of last year, and, about the middle of January, I had a long interview with Mr. Cozens-Hardy, the General Manager of the Gold Coast Railways. That gentleman was undoubtedly attracted by the plans I unfolded to him. It is now three months since that interview, yet I have never heard another word from, or of, him.

I submit that I cannot be expected to hang about at Home, when I would rather be back in South Africa, waiting for decisions to be taken in such leisurely fashion.

However, to return to the attached extract from Mr. Green's letter, you will see that Mr. Pyffe, Chief Forestry Officer in Uganda, is called at the offices of the Syndicate, entirely on his own initiative and entirely ignorant of my negotiations with the Colonial Office during the past fourteen months! It appears, therefore, that the authorities of the Protectorate have not consulted this technical expert.

You will also see that Mr. Pyffe and the Public Works Department of the Protectorate are at loggerheads on the subject of using

wood instead of iron sleepers. The latter must be quite twice as expensive as the former -- why, then, this opposition on the part of the Public Works Department to a Chief Forestry Officer who is anxious to use sleepers made of local timber and is, presumably, prepared to accept full responsibility for advising that course?

If, then, the decision is to be left to the men in British East Africa, I am very much afraid that my proposals may be rejected.

Apart from the time and money that I shall, in that event, have wasted, I shall not mind if nothing comes of my fourteen months of waiting. The evening of the day on which I last saw you, brought me a letter from Portuguese East Africa, offering me large timber concessions on the Lebombo if I would work the process in Mozambique and promising that the necessary capital should be awaiting my arrival.

I, personally, had not moved an inch in this direction (since 1914) and it came as a complete surprise to me. The offer was entirely due to the efforts of an old South African friend, who had recently returned to that country, and who knew the bitter times I had experienced for over four years in endeavouring to persuade British Government Departments to adopt a British Process.

In one of my earliest letters to Lord Milner, I said that I knew that I could have my plans adopted in Portuguese East Africa, but thought it more patriotic to give my own country the first refusal. I had gone to Beira and Lourenco Marques after leaving Mombassa in 1914. My friend tells me that the Portuguese officials have not forgotten. They have no doubts whatever about the Powell Process.

I am writing to you at length, because I have not yet cabled

any reply to the Portuguese offer. If, however, the Colonial Office cannot definitely accept or reject my proposals before the 21st inst., I think myself entitled to close with this firm offer and to sail for Laurence Marques on the 23rd.

I am fully aware that, by writing in this strain, I am likely to offend the Permanent Officials of the Colonial Office. I believe that Sir Herbert Read has done his best for me, and he has certainly been very considerate on both the occasions on which I have seen him.

I have no grudge against anybody at the Colonial Office, but I take exception to the system that can hang up business proposals by the year.

While I reserve to myself the right to sail next week, there is nothing to prevent any Colony or Protectorate from acquiring the Powell Process; I cannot, however, stay here to handle these matters unless they are embarked upon without any further delay.

Perhaps you would suggest to Lord Milner that he should send for Mr. Fyffe -- who, surely, must be a "technical expert", and see that that gentleman has to say on the subject. It must be clear that there is friction between the Public Works Department of the Protectorate and Mr. Fyffe (whom I have never met) on the subject of using local timber for sleepers.

Is it not possible that Mr. Fyffe was never consulted regarding my proposals, simply because it was known that he desired to use wooden sleepers, thus making extra work in the Protectorate?

I should be grateful if you would kindly grant me an interview,

447

at as early an hour as possible, on Tuesday next, the 20th inst.,
That interview would decide whether I sail on the 23rd or postpone my
departure. If, as I hope, you have, meanwhile, had an opportunity of
placing a precis of this letter before Lord Milner, you should be able
to give me some definite advice and information by next Tuesday.

Yours very truly,

C. P. Fitzgerald.

P.S.

The above address will find me until the morning of Monday next,
the 19th inst. Thereafter, I shall again be at

30, Auckland Road,

Upper Norwood, S.E. 19.

THE POWELL WOOD PROCESS SYNDICATE, LIMITED.

718, 719, Salisbury House
London Wall. E.C.2.

K.33.

14th April, 1920.

C. E. PRITCHARD, Esq.,
c/o Mrs. Foad,
Pier Parade, DEAL.

Dear Sir,

.....

The Mr. Fyffe who called here yesterday from Uganda had no knowledge of our previous dealings with the Colonial Office and Crown Agents respecting British East Africa. He had heard of the Process from various publications and had read Mr. Pearson's Indian Report. He had also discussed the Process with certain Professors at Oxford. His interest was mainly concerned with the development of the valuable forests of Uganda, and the efforts he has already made to get the Public Works Departments to adopt wooden sleepers in place of steel. He, however, they have so far obstinately refused to consider, and he is considerably incensed at their attitude.

I explained to Mr. Fyffe the negotiations we have had with the Colonial Office, etc., and referred him to them for their reports. I will communicate with them and will probably see Sir Herbert Reid and Mr. Flood, both of whom he knows, and will subsequently advise me as the matter transpires.

Yours faithfully,
FOR THE POWELL WOOD PROCESS SYNDICATE LTD.
(Sgd) J. A. Green, Secretary.

30, Auckland Road,
UPPER NORWOOD, S. E. 19.

21st April, 1920.

W. C. Bottomley, Esq.,
Colonial Office,
Downing Street,
S. W.

Dear Sir,

You will realise that, if I am to see Major Grogan and others regarding the proposals I have made for British East Africa, it would be advisable to have in writing such extracts as you may think fit to give me from the various communications which you were good enough to read to me yesterday afternoon.

I submit that, in this way, I should probably save many visits to your office as you can, no doubt, give me sufficient information to arouse Major Grogan's interest.

I am sending with this a letter addressed to Major Grogan, whom I was unable to find at the Sports Club. I should be grateful if you would please forward it to him, as you suggested.

Can you possibly let me have the extracts for which I asked above, by the morning of Friday next, the 23rd instant?

Yours faithfully,

C. Pritchard.

N
17312

450

Downing Street

28 April, 1920

Sir,

With reference to your letter of the 30th of December and previous correspondence regarding the Powell Wood Process, I am directed by Viscount Milner to inform you that reports have been received from the Government of the East Africa Protectorate and have since been referred to the Governor, who is now in England.

2. Sir Edward Northey points out that, while the evidence shows that sleepers treated by this process will resist white ants, it is not proved that they will resist fungoid attacks or, definitely, that the wood is quickly seasoned. I am to enquire if you can give any definite information on these points.

3. He also points out that any such proposition is more likely to be successful if established in the Highlands of the Protectorate than at Kapini or on the Tana: at the Eldama forest, for instance, good timber is plentiful on the spot, the climate is suitable and healthy for European workmen, and the branch Railway to the Plateau is to traverse the District.

4. Sir E. Northey suggests that "Mr. Pritchard" be invited to visit the Protectorate and study conditions on the spot. If he can satisfy us as to the efficiency of his treatment when applied to local wood, for local purposes, we could

DRAFT.

MINUTE.

Mr. Bottomley 2/4

Mr.

Mr.

Mr. Grindle 22

Sir H. Lambert

Sir H. Read

Sir G. Fiddes

Col. Amery

Lord Milner

Richard Ery

transport of wood heavier than water might present considerable difficulties."

"If Mr. Pritchard wishes to prosecute his plans for laying down a distillation plant I would strongly recommend that he be advised to visit this country to study the conditions on the spot. From the wording of his letter it appears that he is not conversant either with the district of Kipini or the nature of the mangrove forests."

6. The General Manager of the Uganda Railway states that he is not convinced that a process successful elsewhere would necessarily be successful in the East Africa Protectorate and he suggests that you might be invited to give a guarantee as to the life of each sleeper treated by the Powell Process. It is understood from oral discussion that, if the Government would indicate what wood you were to cut and would allow you to cut it in your own way, you would be willing to replace any sleepers which required renewal within fifteen years of their being laid. I am to ask if you are prepared to confirm this.

7. Lord Milner concurs in the view of the local authorities that the action of the Government in this matter should be limited to dealing on ordinary terms of business with any Company which you may form for working the Powell Process in the East Africa Protectorate, and to giving

the

the Company all the assistance which ~~you~~ can properly be afforded to it in its objects.

I am, &c.,

94

77, Carlisle Mansions, S.W.1.

2nd April, 1920.

452

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge your letter No. 12731/1920, of 20th ultimo, and enclosures, on the subject of the possible introduction of The Powell Wood Process into the East Africa Protectorate, for the production of sleepers in particular.

2. Not only will some 600,000 new sleepers, (which, on account of the expense of iron ones, must be wooden) be soon required for new lines, but a large quantity are required annually for replacement of old and worn out sleepers.

3. It appears from the correspondence that sleepers treated by this process will resist the inroads made by white ants, which is our chief trouble in Africa: it is not proved that they will resist fungoid attacks, or definitely that the wood is quickly seasoned.

4. I should like to get more recent information from Australia - perhaps the Crown Agents could get this. I agree with the Acting Governor that further investigation of local conditions, of which Mr. Pritchard does not seem to be cognisant and which are very different to those prevailing in Australia, are necessary, before any contract is entered into or company floated.

5. I think any such proposition is more likely to be successful if established in the Highlands of the Protectorate than at Kipini or on the Tana: at the Eldama forest, for instance, good timber is plentiful on the spot, the climate is suitable and healthy for European workers, and the branch Railway to the Plateau is to traverse the District.

6. I agree with Mr. Battiscombe that we should, after enquiry, adopt the most economical method of treating timber to render it durable.

7. Meanwhile, I suggest that Mr. Pritchard be invited to visit the Protectorate and study conditions on the spot. If he can satisfy us as to the efficiency of his treatment when applied to local wood for local purposes, we could, no doubt, come to terms with him as to a concession for cutting timber on a Royalty basis to supply sleepers for our Railway. I think he should be given every encouragement, then, to float a Company: personally, I will give him all the help I can.

I have, &c.,

(Sgd) Edward Northey,

Governor, F.A.F.

Under Secretary of State
for the Colonies,

Downing Street, S.W.1.