

1923

KENYA

C O  
25223  
REF  
21 MAY 23

FROM  
MEMORANDUM FOR

DATE  
15th MAY 1923.

CIRCULATION -  
Mr.  
Mr. *B. H. G. G.*  
Secy. U.S. of S. *S. D. R. C. L.*  
*23/E/23*  
From U.S. of S.  
To U.S. of S. *25-4-23*  
Secretary of State.

SUBJECT  
VOI-TAVETA RAILWAY.

States that after fullest consideration, and for reasons now set forth, he regards as a grave mistake the decision to dismantle the railway. Strongly urges reconsideration.

Previous Paper

*m. 6*  
*25/68*

MINUTES

Room 14

Sir R. Compton does not seem to appreciate the fact that the decision has been taken. There are two errors of fact in his letter - (1) The statement that the distance from Maki to Kilindini is 40 miles less than to Tanga, whereas the difference is really 13 miles. (2) Hammond considered the difference so small as to be negligible. (3) The statement that the Kenya Govt. was never consulted, whereas <sup>Lord Milner</sup> ~~it~~ consulted Sir E. Mathey in a detailed telegram as long ago as July 16, 1919 (on <sup>B</sup> *24679/19* S.E.A.) and received his reply on Aug. 6 following (*46369/19* E.A.P.). That reply contained practically the same arguments as are now used for

Subsequent Paper

*to*  
*25316*

for retaining the line.

I acknowledge that it was only after much consideration with great reluctance that it was decided to remove the line, the financial difficulties involved in its retention being regarded as insurmountable. - We might perhaps send him a copy of the memo. etc. etc.  $\frac{146}{227.0}$  (which might be interesting to some persons) but I do not think it right to do so.

We must also mention that in the letter we mentioned in 1917 and expressed our views on the same point - but which was then being held in reserve.

When Sir R. Lydell spoke to me about this I pointed out that Sir E. Northey had been consulted, but he said that some opportunity ought to have been given to the Legislative Council of Kenya to discuss the matter. I

He might have a copy of Sir E. Northey's telegram - J.W. 46360/19.

demanded, as a matter of Constitutional principle, since nothing that they possessed was affected; but as my own feeling has been in the direction other than that decided on I hope that I may not have to argue the case further.

What has chiefly troubled me, I think, is the fact that our telegram

[On 8388/22 - withdrawn] ordering the closing of the line came "out of the blue".

G.C.S. 23.5.23

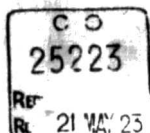
H. J. R.  
23/5/23

I cannot say I should see as Sir R. Lydell will probably speak to him about this.

W.J. 25.5.23

I agree. There at one time have the previous papers before I see in R. Lydell's.

D 26.5



Manor House,  
Clanfield,  
Horndean,  
Hants.

15th May, 1923.

Sir,

I have the honour to draw attention to the question of the Voi-Taveta Railway and to request that serious consideration be given to it before final instructions are issued.

I must express my considered opinion that it would be a grave mistake to lift this link between Kenya and Tanganyika Territory.

2. The Tanga-Moshi Railway may be divided into two sections. The first or coast section from Tanga to Mkumbara, about 100 miles, runs through good country, and this section should remain. It is stated to be in bad condition and to need relaying. The port of Tanga is very inadequate, but it will take dhows and small coasting steamers, and will well serve a line of railway one hundred miles long. This port would only be made into a good deep water port by the expenditure of very large sums - if even then.

The second section, Mkumbara to Moshi, about 120 miles, runs through arid and sparsely populated country,

The Under Secretary of State for the Colonies,  
Downing Street,

S. W.

and will not in any case pay a railway; it is said that the line itself is in fair condition.

The Voi-Taveta (or Voi-Kaha) line, about 110 miles, runs through poor country, and in that respect resembles the Moshi section of the Tanga-Moshi Railway.

3. It is apparently agreed by all that the line from Tanga to **Mkumbara** must be realigned, regraded and replaced by good material. The question is whether the section between **Mkumbara** and **Moshi** in Tanganyika Territory, or the section between **Voi** and **Moshi** (in other words the Voi-Taveta or Voi-Kaha line) in Kenya Colony is to be sacrificed for the purpose. It is assumed that new capital cannot be found. There are three factors to consider - of engineering; of cost; and broad policy. As to the first, it would seem easier and quicker to lift the section between **Mkumbara** and **Moshi** than the Voi-Kaha section; neither presents special difficulties, and there is not much to choose.

4. In the matter of cost, the Voi-Kaha section is (or was) the property of the War Office, and will have to be paid for by Kenya if it remains, and by Tanganyika Territory if it is lifted. The cost is said to be £50,000, a very low price. I believe the proposal will be in the end a costly bargain for Tanganyika Territory, for though the short Tanga-Mkumbara may perhaps pay, the longer line from Tanga to Moshi is very unlikely to pay. I believe it will be a good bargain for Kenya because of the reasons I give later. I do not now consider the cost of lifting and transporting

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either section because there will not be much difference in either case; nor do I consider the cost of reconditioning the Tanga-Mkumbara section in Tanganyika Territory if it is replaced or the cost of reconditioning the Voi-Kahe section in Kenya if it remains where it is because so much depends upon the ambition or the thrift of the Government concerned. The only figures available were too hastily prepared and are too vague to be of use.

5. That is the actual position to-day; what are the reasons for reconsidering the present instruction that the Voi-Kahe section is to be removed? The Associated Chambers of Commerce in East Africa, the East African Section of the London Chamber of Commerce, the Government of Kenya, the new General Manager of the Uganda Railway - an official of wide experience in railway policy - the Special Commissioner (Colonel Hammond), and finally the European settlers in the Moshi and Arusha area are strongly in favour of the retention of this link.

6. There is at present a free interchange between Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika Territory of goods which are the growth, produce or manufacture of either country, and it is highly desirable to extend this measure to full free trade. The retention of the link from Voi to Moshi will facilitate the extension; its removal will retard it.

-4-

7. It is probable that a time will come when a measure of federation between the East African dependencies will be desirable; this line will then be a valuable factor in closer, cheaper and better administration.

8. It may moreover be within the bounds of possibility that the whole basis of the existing mandate for Tanganyika Territory may be most radically altered, and one may well imagine that it would be very unwise on Imperial and political grounds to remove a railway already in existence with the adjoining territory.

9. There is a further point of value. The Kenya Economic Commission of 1919 regarded the Voi-Kahe line as a valuable feeder of the main Uganda Railway. Upon this main line every endeavour is being made to reduce rates for bulk produce, and moreover the considerable and increasing facilities at the ocean port of Kilindini make it clear that produce of the Mombi and Arusha districts will be handled much more cheaply and expeditiously than is possible at the small and comparatively useless port of Tanga - the naul, incidentally, to Kilindini is forty miles shorter than to Tanga. The Uganda Railway is a main arterial system with great advantages of low freights for produce and adequate port facilities, and all possible feeders should bear some assured relationship to future developments.

See 13523/20  
and 13523/20  
C. Lane

-5-

10. This is not a matter where local ambitions or competition should find any opening. I cannot think that a High Commissioner for British East Africa, whose duty it would be to consider the true interests of East Africa as a whole, would recommend the measure against which I now enter my protest. If I have not expressed my opinion before it is because the Kenya Government has not been hitherto consulted.

11. On the above grounds I beg that the Secretary of State will again consider the question.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

R. T. Compton

Sir A. Compton

25223/20

Kangra

179



4 (sent to Albany) 1923

Good  
SC

Sir,

I am in to ack.

The receipt of your letter of the 15<sup>th</sup> of May on the subject of the dismantling of the Voi. Taveta Railway, and to inform you that

it was only after much consideration and with great reluctance that it was

decided to remove the line, the financial difficulties involved by it attention being regarded as insurmountable

2. The enclosed memorandum

DRAFT.

Robert Compton  
K.C.M.G.

MINUTE.

- Mr. Whitaker
- Mr. Parkison 21.5 31.5.23
- Mr. Strachey 31
- Mr. Davis. 2.0
- Sir G. Grindle.
- Sir H. Read.
- Sir J. Masterton Smith.
- Mr. Ormsby-Gore.
- Duke of Devonshire.

22310/20 (without not)  
The without the votes for all 27 Aug 1919  
from Gov. Norbury 6<sup>th</sup> Aug 1919  
Gov/ 46360/19 S.A.P.

to Mr. Norbury  
6 25/6/23 all



summarises the position  
which the S. of S. was  
obliged to adopt in the  
circumstances.

3. I am to point  
out, with reference to  
para. 10 of your letter,

that Sir Edward Northey,  
who was then Gov. of Kenya,  
was consulted in 1919 in  
the matter, and expressed  
much the same opinion as  
that which was formed  
later by Colonel Hammond.

In this connection I transmit  
a copy of a telegram from  
Sir Edward Northey dated  
the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1919.

I am etc.

(Signed) H. J. READ