

1927.



THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

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JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS. NOV 29, 1927

REPORT

CONCERNING

COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN TASMANIA AND THE MAINLAND.

By Authority:

M. J. GURKE, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, CANBERRA.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.

(Fifth Committee.)

(Appointed 22nd January, 1926.)

|| Senator WALTER KINGSMILL, Chairman.

Senate.

- † Senator HATHIL SPENCER FOLL.
- † Senator JOHN BLYTH HAYES, C.M.G.
- † Senator ALBERT ALFRED HOARE.
- *** Senator CHARLES STEPHEN McHUGH.
- † Senator EDWARD NEEDHAM.

House of Representatives.

- † CHARLES LYDIARD AUBREY ABBOTT, Esquire, M.P.
- †† GROSVENOR ARUNDELL FRANCIS, Esquire, M.P.
- SYDNEY LAKE GARDNER, Esquire, M.P.
- JOHN HENRY LISTER, Esquire, M.P.
- PARKER JOHN MOLONEY, Esquire, M.P.
- ** THOMAS PATERSON, Esquire, M.P.
- JOHN HENRY PROWSE, Esquire, M.P.
- †† EDWARD CHARLES RILEY, Esquire, M.P.
- * The Honorable SIR GRANVILLE DE LAUNE RYRIE, K.C.M.G., C.B., V.D., M.P.

* Vice-Chairman from 12th June, 1924, to 1st July, 1925; Chairman from 2nd July, 1925; discharged from attendance, 21st March, 1927. † Discharged from attendance, 20th June, 1926. ‡ Appointed 14 July, 1926. § Vice-Chairman from 22nd January, 1926, to 18th June, 1926 (Chairman from 10th June, 1926, to 4th June, 1926). ¶ Vice-Chairman from 2nd July, 1926, to 21st March, 1927. * Appointed 18th June, 1926. ** Chairman from 22nd January, 1926, to 12th July, 1926. Discharged from attendance, 18th June, 1926. †† Vice-Chairman from 24th March, 1927. ‡‡ Appointed 24th March, 1927. *** Died 21st July, 1927. §§ Appointed 20th September, 1927.

JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.

REPORT

CONCERNING

COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN TASMANIA AND THE MAINLAND.

INTRODUCTORY.

Under date 15th March, 1927, the Prime Minister (the Right Honorable S. M. Bruce, P.C., M.C., M.P.) addressed the following letter to the Chairman of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts:—

"From time to time representations have been made by Tasmanian Members of the House of Representatives and Senators that communication between Tasmania and the mainland is far from satisfactory, and have urged the view that there is room for improvement.

Representations on the subject were recently made to the Minister for Markets and Migration whilst visiting Tasmania, a deputation from the Chamber of Commerce waiting upon him and recommending improved shipping communication.

The question has been considered by Cabinet which has decided to invite your committee to make an investigation into the general question of communications between Tasmania and the mainland, and I shall be glad if steps can be taken to give effect to this decision."

and on the same day, the Prime Minister informed the House of Representatives of the action taken.

COMMITTEE'S PROCEEDINGS.

The Committee undertook to conduct the desired investigation, and after hearing preliminary evidence in Melbourne on the 4th and 5th July, 1927, from the Director of Navigation (Captain J. K. Davis) and the Director of Postal Services (Mr. H. P. Brown, M.B.E., M.I.E.E.) regarding the existing communications between Tasmania and the mainland, proceeded to Tasmania, where evidence was taken at Hobart, Launceston, Scottsdale, Devonport, Ulverstone, Burnie, Stanley, Strahan and Queenstown. The Committee had proposed to meet also at other centres, including various points along the Huon River, and at Waratah and Zeehan, but the nature of the evidence tendered at other places rendered such action unnecessary. Throughout its stay in Tasmania, the Committee was afforded every facility to visit numerous districts other than those where evidence was tendered, and to make itself acquainted with the present development of the State and its future prospects. Further evidence was heard by the Committee at Melbourne on its return to the mainland in August.

The witnesses who appeared before the Committee were—

Abra, Lawrence James, Master Warden, Launceston Marine Board.
 Acheson, Councillor George, Merchant, Smithton, Tasmania.
 Barnett, Herbert Stanley, Director of Barnett Brothers Proprietary Limited, Produce Merchants, Hobart.
 Bell, George John, C.M.G., D.S.O., Member of the House of Representatives for Darwin, Burnie.
 Bird, Samuel, Warden of the Ennui Bay Municipality, Burnie.
 Black, Clyde Burton, Member of the Chamber of Commerce, and Member of the Executive of the Tasmanian Shipping Committee, Hobart.
 Bowtell, William George, Fish Merchant, Hobart.
 Brewster, George Frederick, Manager of T. J. Cane and Company Limited, Hardware Merchants, Hobart.
 Brinsmead, Horace Clowes, O.B.E., M.C., Controller of Civil Aviation, Department of Defence, Melbourne.
 Brown, Daniel, Warden of the Municipality of Circular Head, Smithton, Tasmania.
 Brown, Harry Percy, M.B.E., M.I.E.E., Secretary and Director of the Postmaster-General's Department, Melbourne.
 Cane, Cedric Harold, General Manager of the Tasmanian Orchardists' and Producers' Co-operative Association Limited, Hobart.
 Clark, Francis Henry, Secretary of Tasmanian Steamers Proprietary Limited, Melbourne, and representative of the Union Steamship Company of New Zealand Limited, and Huddart Parker Limited.
 Clark, William Ablitt, Master Mariner, Harbour Master for the Port of Launceston, Tasmania.
 Clinch, John Wright, Superintendent of Mails, General Post Office, Hobart.
 Cummins, Harry Haddon, F.I.C.A., F.S.A.A. (Eng.), F.A.I.S., Public Accountant, Hobart.
 Cummins, Walter Herbert, President of the Chamber of Commerce, Hobart, and General Manager of *The Mercury* office, Hobart.
 Davis, John King, Director of Navigation, Melbourne.
 Donnelly, Sylvester Hinterrocker, Manager of the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau, Sydney.
 Dowdell, Douglas Ludlow, General Manager, Orient Steam Navigation Company Limited, Sydney.
 Eason, Thomas, Master Mariner and Marine Surveyor, Melbourne.
 Edwards, The Honorable Frank Bathurst, M.L.C., Solicitor, Ulverstone, and representative of the North-Western Municipal League, Devonport, Tasmania.
 Ellison, Thomas Kirkwood, Manager of Burgess Brothers Proprietary Limited, Wholesale Merchants, Hobart.
 Faull, Hedley George, Warden of the Queenstown Municipality, Queenstown, Tasmania.
 Firth, Joseph Memory, District Forestry Officer in charge of the North-eastern Forestry District of Tasmania, Scottsdale.
 Hadley, Howard Henry, Hotel Proprietor, Hobart.
 Haines, Frederick Henry, Timber Merchant, Devonport, Tasmania.
 Hay, The Right Reverend Robert Snowden, D.D., Bishop of Hobart.
 Henry, Frederick Ormiston, General Storekeeper, Strahan, Tasmania.
 Heskett, Frank Prosser, Manager of Motors Proprietary Limited, Hobart.
 Holloway, Henry Joseph, Lady Barron, Flinders Island, Tasmania.
 Jackson, David Sydney, Member of the House of Representatives for Bass, Launceston.
 James, Alderman Claude Ernest Weymouth, M.H.A., Launceston, Representative of the Launceston Chamber of Commerce and the Tasmanian Chamber of Manufactures.
 Kemp, Andrew Garing, Managing Director of Kemp and Denning Proprietary Limited, Timber Merchants, Hobart.
 Kemp, Frank Fitch, Warden of the Strahan Municipality; agent for the Union Steamship Company of New Zealand Limited and Tasmanian Steamers Proprietary Limited, Strahan, Tasmania.
 Kennedy, Colin, Managing Director of Webster, Rometch Limited, Railway and Mail Contractors, Hobart.
 Lakin, Alfred Septimus, President of the North-Western Municipal League, Ulverstone, Tasmania.

Laughton, Kenric Charles, Master Warden of the Marine Board of Circular Head, Stanley, Tasmania.
 Leeson, Edward, representative of the North-Western and West Tourist Association, Burnie.
 Livingstone, Kenneth, Master Mariner, Launceston.
 Luttrell, William Edgar, Draper, Strahan, Tasmania.
 Lyons, The Honorable Joseph Aloysius, M.H.A., Premier of Tasmania.
 Marshall, Arthur Herbert, Produce Merchant, Devonport, Tasmania.
 Miscamble, Charles, Commissioner for the Tasmanian Government Railways, Hobart.
 Moore-Robinson, John, F.R.G.S., Secretary to the Launceston Fifty Thousand League, Launceston.
 Murdoch, The Honorable Thomas, Merchant, Hobart.
 Murray, Russell Mervyn, General Manager, Mt. Lyell Mining and Railway Company, Queenstown, and Warden of the Municipality of Gormanston, Tasmania.
 McGaw, Andrew Kidd, Master Warden of the Marine Board of Burnie and Manager of the Van Dieman's Land Company, Tasmania.
 Norman, Leslie, Secretary of the "Come to Tasmania" Organization, Hobart.
 Ogdén, Senator James Ernest, Hobart.
 Osborne, Charles Ray, Manager of the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau, Hobart.
 Page, Louis Ernest, LL.B., Barrister and Solicitor, Launceston, and representative of the Industries and Products Corporation of Tasmania Limited.
 Parsons, Richard Luke, Warden of the Leven Municipality, Ulverstone, Tasmania.
 Peacock, Frederick Hood, Managing Director of Henry Jones and Company Limited, Merchants, Hobart.
 Prater, Arthur George, Acting Master Warden and Secretary of the Marine Board of Strahan, Tasmania.
 Proctor, Leslie Arthur, Warden of the Lilydale Municipality, and member of the North-Eastern Municipal League.
 Ramsay, Arnold, President of the Devonport Traders' Association, Devonport.
 Reid, James Thomas, Master Mariner, Pilot-in-Charge, Low Head, Tasmania.
 Salter, Harold George, Chairman of the North-Eastern Municipal League, and Warden of the Scottsdale Municipality, Tasmania.
 Seabrook, Alfred Charles, Member of the House of Representatives for Franklin, Hobart.
 Shield, Raymond John, Secretary, Royal Auto-Car Club of Tasmania, Hobart.
 Wallach, Bernhard, Director of Lighthouses, Department of Trade and Customs, Melbourne.
 Wardlaw, The Honorable Alan Lindsay, M.L.C., Warden of the Municipality of Ringarooma, Derby, Tasmania.
 Watt, James, Master Warden of the Marine Board of Mersey, Devonport, Tasmania.
 Webb, Herbert Daniel James, Manager of the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau, Melbourne.
 White, Thomas Walter, Provisional Managing Director of Tasmanian Air Services Limited, Melbourne.

Statements were also placed before the Committee on behalf of the Municipalities of Georgetown, Beaconsfield and Waratah, and Mr. H. H. McFie, M.H.A., Devonport.

EXISTING COMMUNICATIONS.

STEAMER SERVICES.

Steamer services between Tasmania and the mainland are at present conducted by the following vessels:—

Passenger Ships.

Service.	Ship.	Passenger Accommodation.	Cargo Space Tons Measurement.	Tonnage.		Average Speed, Knots.	When Built.	Owners.
				Gross.	Net.			
Melbourne-Launceston ..	<i>Nairana</i> ..	412	862	3,942	1,228	16	1917	Tasmanian Steamers Pty. Ltd.
Melbourne-Launceston ..	<i>Leongana</i> ..	387	580	2,448	1,072	16.3	1904	Tasmanian Steamers Pty. Ltd.
Melbourne-Burnie and Devonport ..	<i>Oonah</i> ..	203	1,272	1,798	945	13	1888	Tasmanian Steamers Pty. Ltd.
Melbourne-Stanley, Burnie, Devonport, Ulverstone, and King Island ..	<i>Marrangah</i> ..	42	500 (approx.)	600	340	9	1910	W. Holyman & Sons Ltd.
Sydney-Hobart ..	<i>Zealandia</i> (exploring <i>Riviera</i> 4,703 tons gross)	432	3,404	6,083	3,435	14	1910	Huddart Parker Ltd.

Cargo Ships.

Service.	Ship.	Tonnage.		Average Speed Knots.	When Built.	Owners.
		Gross.	Net.			
Melbourne-Strahan, Regatta Point	<i>Kakariki</i> ..	887	417	7.87	1926	Union Steamship Co.
Melbourne-Strahan, Regatta Point	<i>Tanbar</i> (has provision for 12 passengers)	456	200	9	1912	Tasmanian Government
Melbourne-Hobart	<i>Kaaiti</i> ..	702	404	7.6	1910	Union Steamship Co.
Melbourne-Hobart	<i>Lutana</i> ..	917	541	8	1922	W. Holyman & Sons Ltd.
Melbourne-Launceston ..	<i>Waratah</i> ..	474	271	8	1883	W. Holyman & Sons Ltd.
Brisbane-Hobart	<i>Xiphiola</i> ..	1,775	944	..	1913	Union Steamship Co.
Brisbane-Hobart	<i>Poonah</i> ..	900	421	8.5	1913	North Coast Steam Navigation Co.
Adelaide-Hobart	<i>Lanana</i> ..	1,018	561	8.5	1929	W. Holyman & Sons Ltd.
Adelaide-Tasmania	<i>Winton</i> ..	820	362	9	1913	W. Holyman & Sons Ltd.
Adelaide-Tasmania	<i>Laranah</i> ..	701	312	9	1914	W. Holyman & Sons Ltd.

Other cargo ships which trade from Sydney, Newcastle, Port Pirie and other ports, and are changed about as cargo offers, include—

Ship.	Tonnage.		Average Speed.	When Built.	Owners.
	Gross.	Net.			
<i>Kuliri</i>	1,240	713	8.7	1911	Union Steamship Co.
<i>Korangi</i>	1,266	728	9.5	1914	Union Steamship Co.
<i>Xylos</i>	1,140	586	9.2	1910	Union Steamship Co.
<i>Kovarna</i>	2,125	1,215	9	1916	Australian Steamships Pty. Ltd.
<i>Atteloa</i>	2,243	1,166	..	1925	Union Steamship Co.
<i>Kekarang</i>	3,146	1,806	10	1919	Union Steamship Co.
<i>Iron Baron</i>	3,139	1,985	8.5	1911	Broken Hill Pty. Ltd.

The frequency of the existing interstate services to Tasmania and a comparison with the services conducted in 1913 and 1920, together with comments concerning the variations, are shown in the following table, which was submitted to the Committee by the representative of Tasmanian Steamers Proprietary Limited :—

SERVICES TO TASMANIA, 1913, 1920, 1927.

—	1913.	1920.	1927.	Remarks.
Melbourne-Launceston	Passenger and cargo thrice weekly	Passenger and cargo thrice weekly	Twice weekly, 1st April to 15th September—thrice weekly rest of the year and additional sailings, 18th December to 29th December.	Large percentage of unoccupied berths and space, except at holiday time.
Melbourne-Devonport, Burnie	Passenger and cargo twice weekly	Passenger and cargo twice weekly	Passenger and cargo twice weekly, additional sailings from 10th December to 29th December.	Ditto
Melbourne-Hobart	Passenger and cargo once a week. Horsehoe service en route to and from New Zealand	January and February cargo service, Fort-nightly March to December	Cargo service weekly	The passenger service was discontinued in 1915 with the abandonment of the Melbourne-New Zealand connexion. The passenger support of these steamers between Melbourne and Hobart was never more than a nominal one, as were also the passenger and cargo bookings Hobart and New Zealand. Passengers in recent years have shown a disinclination to patronize Southern routes and this, in conjunction with heavy increase in cost of running has led to concentration of passenger tonnage as far as New Zealand traffic is concerned between Sydney-Auckland and Sydney-Wellington. Passengers now come via Launceston, but a weekly direct cargo service is maintained between Melbourne and Hobart.
Melbourne-Strahan, Hobart	Passenger and cargo service every ten days	Passenger and cargo service at regular intervals	Monthly cargo service Melbourne to Strahan and vice versa. Cargo service between Hobart and Strahan weekly	The service has been gradually reduced, owing to slackness of trade and is amply provided for by the present service.

SERVICES TO TASMANIA, 1913, 1920, 1927—continued.

—	1913.	1920.	1927.	Remarks.
Sydney-Launceston	Passenger and cargo service fortnightly	Passenger and cargo service fortnightly	Cargo service fortnightly	The passenger service was discontinued in 1921 in view of the poor support. In 1920 they only averaged approximately 32 per trip from Sydney. The present service is able to cope with far more cargo than is offering and the steamer frequently has to proceed to Burnie or Devonport to fill up with produce.
Sydney-Hobart	Passenger and cargo service every five days January and February, weekly March to November. Every four days in December	Passenger and cargo service weekly	Passenger and cargo services weekly. Passenger service fortnightly during winter months	The present steamers are running with a very large number of berths each way unoccupied, also high percentage of cargo space unoccupied. A large number of overseas vessels now call for wool, zinc and other cargo, which previously was shipped to the mainland for transhipment.
Sydney-North West Coast	Weekly cargo service	Weekly cargo service	Weekly cargo service (mostly two and sometimes three steamers)	No change. The service is not nearly utilized to full extent.
Hobart-New Zealand (Direct Service)	Passenger and cargo service weekly	Periodical cargo sailings as required; but little or no general cargo offering; shipments consist mostly of timber	Periodical cargo sailings as required, but little or no general cargo offering; shipments consist mostly of timber	Passenger and cargo service discontinued in 1916. In 1915 taking the year as a whole the total number of passengers averaged only to New Zealand, 8 saloon, 11 steerage, and from New Zealand 13 saloon and 9 steerage. The cargo position was equally bad. Occasional cargo tonnage is now provided as required.
Hobart-Fremantle	.. ..	.. ..	A boat every three months	One cargo boat monthly
Kenilba-Strahan	.. ..	.. ..	One cargo boat monthly	Average of one cargo boat a week
Hobart	.. ..	.. ..	Average of one cargo boat a week	Fortnightly to three weekly cargo service
Ridson-Port Pirie	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	As required about monthly cargo service
Maris Island-Sydney	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	Weekly cargo service
Maris Island-Melbourne	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..
Hobart, Huon-Brisbane and vice versa	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	Fortnightly during fruit season, say March to September

Intermittent calls are also made by overseas steamers which touch both Tasmania and the mainland, viz.:—Commonwealth and Dominion Line, United States Shipping Board, Japan/Australia Line and the Norwegian/Australian Line.

During the apple export season—from about February to May—the following additional lines call at Tasmanian ports :—

Orient Company, which, in accordance with its overseas mail contract, has to make, on its steamers' journeys to the United Kingdom, at least three calls at Hobart during the months of February to May inclusive.

Australian Commonwealth Line of Steamers.

Peninsular and Oriental.

New Zealand Shipping Company.

White Star.

China Mutual.

Blue Funnel.

Scottish Shire.

Federal.

Aberdeen.

The above-mentioned overseas services (allowing for alterations due to fluctuation of trade, new ships, &c.) are the same as those provided before the coasting trade provisions of the Navigation Act commenced on 1st July, 1921. From that date, however, the overseas ships, while continuing to call at Tasmania, ceased to carry passengers or cargo between Australian ports. The only line to do so is the Commonwealth Government Line, which, though carrying interstate passengers regularly, enters for cargo in special circumstances.

MAIL SERVICES.

The contractors for the conveyance of mails between Tasmania and the mainland are Tasmanian Steamers Proprietary Limited. The contract was originally entered into with Huddart Parker Limited and the Union Steamship Company of New Zealand Limited jointly for a period of one year from 1st May, 1921, terminable thereafter upon twelve months' notice by either side. This date coincided with the bringing into the service of the new turbine steamer *Nairana*. In January, 1922, the Postmaster-General approved of an application made by the joint contractors to assign the contract to Tasmanian Steamers Proprietary Limited, a new company formed to facilitate the working of the service, it having been found inconvenient for the two companies to handle the business of the contract.

The contract covers two services, namely—

- (a) Melbourne-Launceston, and (b) Melbourne-Burnie.

The Melbourne-Launceston service is performed by the *Loongana* or *Nairana* at the option of the contractors, and these vessels, though capable of higher speeds, have to maintain an average speed of 15 knots in average weather between Gellibrand Light and Low Head. The summer time-table—from 10th September to 31st March—provides for the vessel to leave Melbourne, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and to leave Launceston on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. The winter time-table—from 1st April to 15th September—provides for the vessel to leave Melbourne on Tuesday and Friday and to leave Launceston on Thursday and Monday.

The Melbourne Burnie service is performed by the *Oonah* or such other vessel as may be approved by the Postmaster-General; and the average speed the vessel is required to maintain in average weather is at least 13 knots between Gellibrand Light and Burnie. The summer time-table—from 10th September to 31st March—provides for the vessel leaving Melbourne on Tuesday and Friday, and Burnie on Wednesday and Saturday. The winter time-table—from 1st April to 15th September—provides for the vessel to leave Melbourne on Monday and Thursday, and Burnie on Tuesday and Friday.

In view of special circumstances, however, arrangements were made, in respect of this year only, for the winter time-table to operate from 1st May until 15th October, and for the Launceston vessel to leave Melbourne on Wednesday and Saturday, and to depart from Launceston on Friday and Monday, and for the Burnie vessel to leave Melbourne on Tuesday and Friday, and sail from Burnie on Wednesday and Saturday.

For a period of eight weeks in the summer of each year, the *Oonah* is replaced by either the *Loongana* or the *Nairana*. The *Oonah* may also be withdrawn from the service once in each six months for inspection or overhaul, but not for more than four weeks altogether in any period of twelve months. Another steamer approved by the Postmaster-General must then be substituted.

The contract provides that the rates of freight and/or passage money shall, at the request of the contractors, be reviewed by the Postmaster-General in the event of the mail services or either of them being interfered with or the cost of conducting them being increased from any cause or causes, including strikes, lockouts, quarantine or stoppage of collieries; and further, that such rates shall not be increased without the approval of the Postmaster-General, which approval shall not be arbitrarily withheld.

Mails shall be delivered at and received from the wharf at which the vessel usually berths, but in the case of Launceston, when the tide will not permit the vessel to remain at the wharf until after the arrival of the express train from Hobart, the contractors shall provide a steam tender from Launceston at their expense to convey all mails and passengers to the steamer which may anchor at Rosevears or such other approved place as may be convenient; but the steamer shall only be required to wait at Rosevears or such other approved place for such period as will leave sufficient time to enable the vessel to clear Tamar Heads before dark.

Amongst other things incidental to the performance of the service, the contract provides for:—(a) employment of white labour only; (b) rate of wages and working conditions to be those recognized in the trade between the ports mentioned in the contract; (c) penalty for delay

in departure of vessel; (d) penalty for overcarriage or non-delivery of mails or postal articles; (e) suspension of payment by the Postmaster-General if service not fully performed; (f) any difference or dispute to be settled by arbitration.

The payment to the contractors for the performance of the service is £30,000 per annum payable in equal monthly instalments. It was stated in evidence that this amount was arrived at by negotiation, and not as the result of competitive tendering.

REQUIREMENTS OF TASMANIA.

When it was announced that this investigation was to be undertaken by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Joint Committee of Public Accounts, the Premier of Tasmania (the Honorable J. A. Lyons) convened a conference of representative bodies from all parts of the State to ascertain their views regarding the requirements of Tasmania so far as communications with the mainland were concerned, and to arrange for the preparation of evidence for submission to the Committee. In Hobart, a conference representing the Hobart Chamber of Commerce, the Hobart Marine Board, the Tasmanian Shipping Committee, the Hobart City Council, the State Executive of the "Come to Tasmania" Organization, and the Hobart Development League—appointed a sub-committee comprising Messrs. C. B. Black (Chairman), F. W. Heritage and L. Norman (Secretary) which prepared a "Statement of the Case" for presentation to the Accounts Committee. This "Statement" indicated that "it has been unanimously agreed by conference, representing all parts of the State, that the following are the immediate and minimum requirements for improving Tasmania's communications with the mainland of Australia:—

- "(1) Amendment of the Navigation Act, so that overseas vessels calling at interstate ports in pursuit of overseas trade may be used as heretofore for interstate passengers and cargo.
- "(2) Amendment of the Orient Mail Contract, so that the Orient mail steamers will be required to include Hobart in their itinerary all the year round, and that it will be obligatory upon them to carry interstate passengers to the extent of the number of passengers offering, consistent with their accommodation available.
- "(3) A superior passenger steamer, fitted with refrigerated chambers, for the Hobart-Melbourne service.
- "(4) Amendment of the Bass Strait Mail Contract to provide for specially designed tourist ships, fitted with oil-burning furnaces or motor engines, and capable of a speed at sea of not less than eighteen knots, for the Melbourne-Launceston and Melbourne-North-West Coast routes.
- "(5) Improved mail services, steamer and/or aerial.
- "(6) Reduced passenger fares and rates of freight."

It was also indicated to the Committee that—

- (7) An improved service between Sydney and Hobart was required; and
- (8) The steamers of the Australian Commonwealth Line should call at Hobart regularly throughout the year.

In submitting these requirements to the Committee, it was pointed out that, as a maritime State, Tasmania is dependent entirely upon sea transport for trade and intercourse with the other States, and in consequence, interstate trade is relatively more important to Tasmania than to any other State; in value three to four times as great as overseas trade and two and a half times as great as the average of all the States. The tonnage of interstate trade per head of population amounts to 5.06 in the case of Tasmania as against 2.01 for all other States, and the average value of Tasmanian interstate trade is stated to be £14 per ton. The aggregate value of Tasmanian imports and exports for 1925-26 was £17,154,000 of which nearly £13,000,000 represented trade within the Commonwealth, viz.:—Imports £8,932,000 and exports £6,071,000, indicating that the mainland States have a considerable interest in efficient services to Tasmania. In passenger traffic, the figures are—for the twelve months ended March, 1927—total number of passengers carried by coastal steamers excluding Tasmania 209,509; total number of passengers carried between Tasmania and interstate ports 100,819.

Tasmania is small in area, but owing to its geographical configuration, the trade of the State flows through three principal recognized channels—Hobart, including ports on the Huon River, Launceston, and the ports of the North-West Coast, viz.:—Burnie, Ulverstone, Devonport, Smithton and Stanley. The only port on the West Coast is Strahan, on Macquarie Harbour, but a large quantity of the exports from this area is now sent through Burnie.

The trade of the various ports of Tasmania for 1925-26 is indicated by the following statistics:—

Port.	Imports.	Exports.	Total Trade.	Proportion of Total Trade per £1,000.
	£	£	£	£
Burnie	497,099	592,027	1,089,126	631
Devonport	424,536	438,613	863,149	50
Hobart	4,405,091	4,984,150	9,389,241	547
King Island	35,473	45,549	81,019	5
Launceston	2,809,059	1,924,222	4,733,281	276
Smithton	38,242	78,106	116,353	7
Stanley	60,119	176,068	236,187	14
Strahan	86,380	346,231	432,621	25
Ulverstone	94,684	118,887	213,571	121
Total Tasmania	8,450,793	8,703,885	17,154,648	1,000
Total Oversea	1,518,210	2,578,851	4,097,061	239
Total Interstate	6,932,583	6,125,004	13,057,587	761

Tasmania, with its natural advantages, is endeavouring to build up a large tourist traffic, but, it is maintained, that owing to the limited first class steamer accommodation available, its efforts are somewhat nullified. The exclusion of the overseas steamers from the coastal passenger trade and the frequent interruptions to the interstate services, and the hold-ups of ships during the holiday season have destroyed, to a large extent, the confidence of the travelling public. In addition, during the summer, when people are most desirous of visiting Tasmania, great difficulty is often met with in endeavouring to secure satisfactory passages.

Elaborating further each of these requirements, it has been indicated in evidence as follows:—

1. *Amendment of the Navigation Act.*—When the coasting trade provisions of the Navigation Act came into operation on 1st July, 1921, overseas ships, with the exception of the Commonwealth Government Line, while continuing to call at Tasmania, ceased to carry passengers or cargo between Australian ports. Under section 286 of the Navigation Act, however, permits could be issued for overseas vessels to engage in interstate trade if it could be shown that no licensed ship was available or that the services were inadequate. An amendment of that section of the act now provides that during certain periods of the year, British ships of 10,000 tons gross and over, having a speed of at least 15 knots may be permitted to carry passengers between Hobart and the ports of Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne without having to be licensed under the coasting trade provisions of the act. Notices granting such exemptions were issued for the periods from 6th March, 1926, to 31st May, 1926, and from 1st January, 1927, to 31st May, 1927. Although these facilities were granted during the apple export season, no advantage of the exemptions was taken by the shipping companies in either year. It was explained, however, that the tourist season, when passenger accommodation is in demand, is somewhat earlier in the year than the fruit season.

Evidence placed before the Committee was emphatic and unanimous that the Navigation Act had had a detrimental effect on Tasmania by imposing a restraint on the free movement of passengers and cargo. This phase of Tasmania's requirements was investigated during 1923-24 by the Royal Commission on the Navigation Act, as a result of which, a majority of the Royal Commissioners recommended that the coasting trade provisions of the Navigation Act be repealed. Such action has, however, not been taken, but the Act has been amended as indicated to permit of British vessels, under certain conditions, carrying interstate passengers. No benefit to intending passengers has, however, accrued, under the amended legislation, as the overseas shipping companies have not taken advantage of the opportunity thereby afforded to carry interstate passengers to or from Tasmania. Partial exemptions, it was maintained, were of no avail, but it was indicated in evidence that if the overseas shipping companies, with vessels on the British register, could enjoy freedom of trade throughout the year, they would no doubt be prepared to again participate in the interstate passenger traffic. On the other hand, interstate companies with vessels on the Australian register, with consequent higher running costs, &c., would be subjected to this unfair competition, and, moreover, whilst the overseas companies would be competing against them in Australian waters, interstate companies would not be in a position to compete in the overseas trade.

2. *Amendment of the Orient Mail Contract.*—This amendment is required to provide a superior passenger service to all States of the Commonwealth and to place Tasmania on a commercial equality with the capitals of the other States in regard to communication with England and India. It is contended that the trade between Tasmania and India can be maintained only by the elimination of transhipment at Melbourne. Under the contract between the Commonwealth Government and the Orient Company, a payment of £130,000 per annum is made for services rendered by the Company, which include thirteen (13) trips yearly at intervals of four weeks, between Australia and Great Britain. The contract also provides for the mail steamers returning to the United Kingdom to make at least three (3) calls annually at Hobart during the months of February to May inclusive. This provision was inserted by the Commonwealth to facilitate the export from Tasmania of perishable cargo, particularly fruit. To make a regular call throughout the year, would, it was stated on behalf of the Company, be uneconomical and additional subsidy would be required; whilst the inauguration of a service calling at Hobart on both outward and inward journeys—that is, to place Hobart on an equal footing with the other capital cities—would necessitate the employment of an additional steamer involving a capital expenditure of approximately £1,000,000 sterling. From the standpoint of the delivery of mails, it was pointed out that no benefit would accrue to Tasmania from a call at Hobart, as it was shown that if inward mails were so carried, they would reach Hobart later than under existing arrangements; moreover, delays would occur in the delivery of parcels and cargo destined for New South Wales and Queensland.

3. *Institution of a Hobart Melbourne Service.* It was stated that this service is required to maintain permanent weekly communication for passengers and cargo, and that for the conveyance of perishable cargo, such as fish, which has now to be sent via Launceston or Burnie, refrigerated chambers should be provided. At present, fish from Hobart for the mainland has to be packed in considerable quantities of ice, mailed to Launceston or Burnie and there transhipped. Evidence by the shipping company indicated that past experience had proved that the traffic between Hobart and Melbourne would not support the expense of a passenger steamer. Two cargo vessels are, now in the trade, and, according to the shipping company, have been found adequate for requirements. Some years ago, the trade was catered for by a weekly service running from Melbourne to New Zealand via Hobart and returning to Sydney. Owing to lack of support this service ceased in 1914. A ten-day service with smaller steamers was then instituted, but two years later had to be discontinued for the same reason.

4. *Amendment of the Bass Strait Contract.* It is maintained that the small type and class of steamers now engaged in the Bass Strait service are not conducive to the comfort of travellers and that the traffic at peak periods, particularly at Christmas, has outgrown the capacity of the ships. Owing to the limited number of two-berth cabins, the crowding of passengers and the use of social rooms for sleeping places, the voyage across the Strait, especially in wet and rough weather, instead of being an enjoyable sea trip, is the reverse of pleasant. Additional space for the carriage of motor cars is also considered essential on this run, in view of the number of tourists desirous of taking their own cars to the Island. The request for oil burners is based on a desire to eliminate the uncertain human equation in the stokeholds, which, in the past, has been responsible for strikes which have caused delays to, or cessation of, the services. Additional speed is asked for so that the time spent in crossing the Strait can be reduced by a few hours, and the utilization of Port Melbourne as the mainland point of connexion has also been suggested as a means of achieving this end. It is stated that, under present conditions, it sometimes happens, when the steamers are running at high pressure in the summer, cargo from the mainland remains undischarged.

The present Bass Strait contract service consists of two routes Melbourne-Launceston, and Melbourne-Burnie and Devonport.

The conduct of the Launceston service as regards size and length of vessel is governed by the River Tamar, and the time of departure of the steamer from Melbourne has also to be regulated each trip according to the state of the tide in the Tamar. From the mouth of the river, Low Head, to a point about twelve miles from Launceston, there is sufficient depth of water for the present steamers at all times, but vessels can only negotiate the upper reaches of the river to King's Wharf, at the city, at certain states of the tide, and when the tide is missed through delays due to fog or other causes, passengers and luggage are transferred downstream to a tender for conveyance to the city, the steamer following at a later hour. The tender has also to be used, at times, on the journey from Launceston when the tide necessitates the steamer leaving the wharf before the arrival of the passenger and mail train from Hobart. The abolition of the use of the tender is unanimously advocated. Several proposals for the development, as ports

to Launceston, of places lower down the river have been put forward from time to time to overcome existing difficulties, but the Launceston Marine Board is of opinion that by its dredging policy now in operation, sufficient depth of water will be available in the upper reaches of the river before the end of the current calendar year. A wharf has been erected at Bell Bay—a point a few miles from the mouth of the river—where there is ample depth of water for all vessels, but this port is intended solely for overseas trade, and as yet, Bell Bay is connected to Launceston by road only.

Burnie, situated on Emu Bay on the north-west coast of Tasmania, is a deep water port, and is the principal outlet for the products of the north-west and west coasts. Vessels of practically any size are able to enter or leave this port at all times. It is also claimed that Burnie is the only Tasmanian port from which mails from the mainland can reach all parts of the State within one day. Devonport, the other port of call of the contract steamers, is situated on the Mersey River about 30 miles along the coast easterly from Burnie.

In support of better services to the north-west coast, it is contended that notwithstanding the immense possibilities of this part of Tasmania, its development has been retarded and handicapped by the unsatisfactory service provided by s.s. *Oonah*, a vessel 30 years old, which, although suitable as a cargo carrier, is most inadequate and unsuitable for modern passenger transport. Complaints regarding the unsuitability of this vessel are unanimous and vigorous. On the other hand, the *Loongana*, which is used in this service for three months each year, whilst suitable for the passenger traffic, does not, it is considered, possess sufficient cargo space.

The North-Western Municipal League, on behalf of all the municipalities of the north-west and west coasts, placed before the Committee a comprehensive statement of the present and probable future development of the north-west and west coasts, together with proposals for the improvement of steamer and mail services which, it was considered, would meet the requirements of the districts. The service desired by this body is a daily run to the northern ports of Tasmania—tri-weekly each to Launceston and Burnie—the time-table to Burnie to provide throughout the year for the arrival of the steamer from Melbourne on Saturday mornings, and its departure the same night, and during the summer months, Wednesday to be one of the days of arrival and departure. The type of steamer suggested is a twin screw oil burner or motor vessel of 3,000 tons, of normal draught, capable of doing eighteen knots, with ample cargo space, fitted with up-to-date cargo handling gear, and a due proportion of two-berth cabins. Such a vessel, it is considered, would be able to leave Melbourne at 6 p.m. and arrive at Burnie at 6.30 a.m. next day.

It is frankly admitted by the shipping companies that the passenger accommodation, to Tasmania is taxed at holiday times, but this state of affairs, they claim, is common to all forms of transport, and it cannot be expected that fleets should be provided for services all the year round on the basis of a peak period of a few weeks. Passenger steamers also carry cargo, but there is no equivalent pressure on the cargo space when extra trips are run, and even at other times, nothing like sufficient cargo can be obtained to fill the space available.

As an indication of the demand throughout the year for passenger accommodation and cargo space to Tasmania, the shipping company tendered the following figures showing the average percentage of the vacant space for the twelve months ended 30th June last:—

Service.	Passenger Accommodation		Cargo Accommodation	
	Vacant	Per cent.	Vacant	Per cent.
Launceston-Melbourne	43.6	..	84.2	..
Devonport, Burnie-Melbourne ..	55.2	..	83.3	..
Hobart-Melbourne	..	..	27.0	..
Hobart-Sydney	42.8	..	60.6	..
Hobart-Queensland	..	..	42.9	..

These percentages have been compiled from detailed figures, submitted for the information of the Committee, setting out, in respect of each service, for each month, the number of trips made, the number of berths available and actually used, the amount of cargo space available and the tonnage carried.

In addition to the above, there is also lying unused for nine or ten months of the year the whole of the passenger and cargo accommodation of either the *Nairana* or *Loongana*, as the traffic only warrants the employment of one of these vessels during that period. The demand for increased speed, it was submitted, raises the question whether the benefit to be derived by saving about two hours on the journey would warrant the very considerable additional expense which would be involved.

5. *Improved Mail Services* The following statements show the mail arrangements between Tasmania and the mainland:—

SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS UNDER PRESENT SUMMER TIME TABLE.

FROM MELBOURNE.

Day of Departure.	Contract or Non-contract Vessel.	Posting Period in Melbourne.	Route followed by Mails.	Approximate Time of Delivery of Mails		
				In Hobart.	In Launceston.	In Burnie
Monday ..	Contract ..	10 a.m., Saturday to 1.40 p.m., Monday	Launceston ..	8 a.m., Wednesday	1 p.m., Tuesday	Wednesday morning
Tuesday ..	Contract ..	1.40 p.m., Monday to 10.40 a.m., Tuesday	Burnie ..	8 a.m., Thursday	3.30 p.m., Wednesday	..
Wednesday ..	Contract ..	10.40 a.m., Tuesday to 2.40 p.m., Wednesday	Launceston ..	8 a.m., Friday	1 p.m., Thursday	Friday morning
Thursday ..	Contract ..	2.40 p.m., Wednesday to 10.40 a.m., Friday	Burnie ..	8 a.m., Monday	8 a.m., Monday	Saturday morning
Friday ..	Contract ..	2.40 p.m., Wednesday to 2.40 p.m., Friday	Launceston ..	8 a.m., Monday	8 a.m., Monday	..
Saturday ..	Non-Contract ..	2.40 p.m., Friday to 10 a.m., Saturday	Launceston ..	8 a.m., Tuesday	8 a.m., Monday	..
	Non-Contract ..	10.40 a.m., Friday to 12.30 p.m., Saturday	Burnie ..	..	..	Monday morning

FROM TASMANIA.

Day of Departure.	Contract or Non-contract Vessel.	Route followed by Mails.	Mails Leave.			Arrive Melbourne.
			Hobart.	Launceston.	Burnie.	
Monday ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Tuesday ..	Contract ..	Launceston ..	8 a.m., Tuesday	2 p.m., Tuesday	6 a.m., Tuesday	Wednesday
Wednesday ..	Contract ..	Burnie ..	8 a.m., Wednesday	1.20 p.m., Wednesday	9 a.m., Wednesday	Thursday
Thursday ..	Contract ..	Launceston ..	8 a.m., Thursday	2 p.m., Thursday	6 a.m., Thursday	Friday
Friday ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Saturday ..	Contract ..	Launceston ..	8 a.m., Saturday	1.20 p.m., Saturday	..	Monday
	Contract ..	Burnie ..	..	..	9 p.m., Saturday	Monday

SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS UNDER PRESENT (1927) WINTER TIME-TABLE.

FROM MELBOURNE.

Day of Departure.	Contract or Non-contract Vessel.	Posting Period in Melbourne.	Route followed by Mails.	Approximate Time of Delivery of Mails.		
				In Hobart.	In Launceston.	In Burnie.
Monday ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Tuesday ..	Contract ..	12.30 p.m., Saturday to 10.40 a.m., Tuesday	Burnie ..	8 a.m., Thursday	3.30 p.m., Wednesday	Wednesday morning
Wednesday ..	Contract ..	10.40 a.m., Tuesday to 2.15 p.m., Wednesday	Launceston ..	8 a.m., Friday	1 p.m., Thursday	Friday morning
Thursday ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Friday ..	Contract, Non-contract ..	10.40 a.m., Friday to 12.30 p.m., Saturday	Launceston ..	8 a.m., Monday	8 a.m., Monday	Monday morning

FROM TASMANIA.

Day of Departure.	Contract or Non-contract Vessel.	Route followed by Mails.	Mails Leave.			Arrive Melbourne.
			Hobart.	Launceston.	Burnie.	
Monday ..	Contract ..	Launceston ..	8 a.m., Monday	2 p.m., Monday	6 a.m., Monday	Tuesday
Tuesday ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Wednesday ..	Contract ..	Burnie ..	8 a.m., Wednesday	1.20 p.m., Wednesday	9 p.m., Wednesday	Thursday
Thursday ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Friday ..	Contract ..	Launceston ..	8 a.m., Friday	2 p.m., Friday	6 a.m., Friday	Saturday
Saturday ..	Contract ..	Burnie ..	8 a.m., Saturday	1.20 p.m., Saturday	9 p.m., Saturday	Sunday

SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS UNDER LAST WINTER TIME-TABLE.

FROM MELBOURNE.

Day of Departure	Contract or Non-contract Vessel	Posting Period in Melbourne	Route followed by Mails	Approximate Time of Delivery of Mails		
				In Hobart.	In Launceston.	In Burnie.
Monday	Contract	12.30 p.m., Saturday to 10.40 a.m., Monday	Burnie	8 a.m., Friday	3.30 p.m., Tuesday	Tuesday morning
Tuesday	Contract	10.40 a.m., Monday, to 2.15 p.m., Tuesday	Launceston	8 a.m., Thursday	1 p.m., Wednesday	Thursday morning
Wednesday						
Thursday	Contract	2.15 p.m., Tuesday, to 10.40 a.m., Thursday	Burnie	8 a.m., Saturday	3.30 p.m., Friday	Friday morning
Friday	Contract	10.40 a.m., Thursday, to 2.15 p.m., Friday	Launceston	8 a.m., Monday	8 a.m., Monday	Monday morning
Saturday	Non-contract	2.15 p.m., Friday, to 12.30 p.m., Saturday	Burnie	8 a.m., Tuesday	3.30 p.m., Monday	Monday morning

FROM TASMANIA.

Day of Departure	Contract or Non-contract Vessel	Route followed by Mails	Mails Leave.			Arrive Melbourne.
			Hobart.	Launceston.	Burnie.	
Monday	Contract	via Launceston	8 a.m., Monday	2 p.m., Monday	6 a.m., Monday	Tuesday
Tuesday	Contract	Burnie	8 a.m., Tuesday	1.20 p.m., Tuesday	9 p.m., Tuesday	Wednesday
Wednesday						
Thursday	Contract	Launceston	8 a.m., Thursday	2 p.m., Thursday	6 a.m., Thursday	Friday
Friday						
Saturday	Contract	Burnie	8 a.m., Saturday	1.20 p.m., Saturday	9 p.m., Saturday	Sunday

Non-contract vessels are utilized wherever any advantage is to be gained.

It is contended that Tasmania is entitled to a daily mail service, to be provided by improved steamer services and/or supplementary aerial services. The principal complaint, however, concerned the operation of the winter time-table. During the past winter, owing to the arrival of the *Loongana* at Launceston on Sundays and Thursdays, and the *Oonah* at Burnie on Wednesdays and Saturdays, there had been a heavy accumulation of mail matter at the commencement and close of each week. It was explained by the postal authorities that the changes were made as the result of representations from the north west and west coast districts of Tasmania, and although the alterations had given satisfaction in those districts, they had caused some protests from Hobart and Launceston. Under the previous winter time-table, the *Oonah* arrived in Melbourne on Sunday, and had to leave again at noon on Monday—thus giving only four hours for working the cargo with the result that shipments both ways had to be curtailed. Statistics showed that the alterations made had resulted in an appreciable increase in tonnage per trip. A further difficulty affecting the working of a winter time-table to the Tamar is the prevalence of storms and fogs, which render it impracticable for a steamer to commence its return trip on the day of its arrival at Launceston. The objections from Hobart result mainly from the gap of three days between Monday and Thursday in the delivery of interstate mails. Under the rearrangement, however, an improvement has been effected regarding the English mail. Previously, this was delivered in Hobart on Tuesday morning, the outward mail being despatched at an earlier hour on the same day; now, the English mail is delivered on Monday morning, and the outward mail is despatched on Wednesday morning, permitting two clear days for reply to correspondence, and insuring delivery to England one week earlier. The Launceston objections relate to the reduction in the number of days on which deliveries are made by postmen, and to the gap in the delivery of correspondence between Monday morning and Wednesday afternoon. Interstate and English mails are now delivered at 8 a.m. on Monday, as compared with 3.30 p.m., under the old time-table, and the outward mail closes a day later. The Wednesday delivery is, however, made one day later than hitherto, but the corresponding delivery on Tuesday, under the old arrangements contained only mail posted between noon on Saturdays and 10.40 a.m. on Monday, whilst the present Wednesday delivery contains the postings of all day Monday and up to 2.15 p.m. on Tuesday.

Another complaint was that the New South Wales, Queensland, and Western Australia mails for Tasmania were subject to serious delay on such days as the *Oonah* left Melbourne, because, on account of her low speed, this vessel had to sail at noon, thus missing the interstate mails which arrived in Melbourne at a later hour. In reply to this complaint, the postal authorities pointed out that mails from Western Australia did not reach Melbourne on the days on which the *Oonah* sailed, and no mails from Queensland arrived in Melbourne on Tuesdays. Mails from Queensland reaching Melbourne on Friday would miss the *Oonah* sailing on that day, but as the *Oonah*'s mails were delivered in Hobart and Launceston by postmen on Monday morning, together with the *Loongana* mails, which left Melbourne on Saturday, no delay in the delivery of the Queensland mail took place. The early departure of the *Oonah*, however, prevented a mail from Sydney closing on Monday catching the steamer, and to this extent, there was delay. But so far as Friday's sailing was concerned, no delay in delivery arose, as the mails leaving Melbourne on Friday and Saturday were delivered together in Hobart and Launceston on Monday morning.

The service to the north-west coast for inward interstate mails was considered satisfactory, but owing to the outward sailing arrangements, it was stated, the only effective service was that provided by the *Oonah* leaving Burnie on Wednesday and Saturday, consequently, shipping documents for Sydney—where the bulk of the coast produce goes—which were not available for despatch on Saturday evening were delayed until the following Wednesday. To overcome this difficulty, an outward mail on Tuesday was suggested.

Concerning the distribution of mails in the north-west of Tasmania, it was pointed out to the Committee, whilst at Stanley, that although the mails for Stanley, Smithton, and other towns in the extreme north-west of the State arrived at Burnie from the mainland at 6 a.m., they did not reach their destination until after 6 p.m., due to their being conveyed by rail. If the regular service motor cars were employed, it was stated that the mail would be at Stanley and Smithton about 11 a.m., and replies could be despatched by the cars returning at 3 p.m. the same day, and so catch the return mail to the mainland.

6. *Reduction in Fares and Freights.*—Tasmania being a maritime State and at a disadvantage compared with the mainland States, is much affected by the fares and freights between the Island and Australia. High costs of interstate transport, have, it was stated, handicapped the establishment of new industries, and a complete inquiry into maritime transport, including the cost of handling cargo on wharves, is urged, with the view to cheapening the cost of transport of goods and passengers. This subject, however, has been dealt with in recent years by the Select Committee on Sea Carriage of 1920, and the Royal Commission on the Navigation Act in 1923, and in each case, the opinion was that the rates charged were justified. Under the existing Bass Strait contract, fares and freights cannot be raised without the sanction of the Postmaster-General. The rates were reviewed when the current contract was entered into in 1921, and since then, there has been no increase in fares, but a rise in freights of 2s. per ton was allowed to meet increased costs due to Arbitration Court awards, and other causes.

7. *Improved Sydney-Hobart Service.*—This service was conducted regularly by *s.s. Riverina* assisted at peak periods during the past two or three years by *s.s. Zealandia*. Following the stranding of the *Riverina*, the *Zealandia* is now making a regular fortnightly run from Hobart to Sydney. The principal complaints concerning this service are insufficient accommodation during the summer rush period, and the inadequate accommodation then offered. Objection was taken to the use of alleged second class accommodation for saloon passengers, but the company states that these vessels are fitted with alternative cabins, which can be used either as first or second saloon, according to the demand.

8. *Call of Commonwealth Line Ships.*—It is claimed that as Tasmania has to bear its share of any losses incurred by the Commonwealth Line, the vessels under that flag should call regularly at Hobart throughout the year, instead of, as at present, only during the apple season.

The question of the participation of the Commonwealth Line in interstate trade was investigated by the Accounts Committee during its inquiry into the Commonwealth Government Shipping activities, and on this matter, the Committee reported as follows:—

"It was advocated in evidence before the Committee that as a Commonwealth Government Line, with steamers complying with the provisions of the Navigation Act, greater facilities should be offered for the carriage of interstate cargo, particularly between Tasmania and Western Australia. Although the Line catered largely for interstate passengers, it was, in the opinion of the Board, considered undesirable and inadvisable for the Line to participate in the interstate cargo trade, except in cases of necessity, such as the carriage of frozen meat from Brisbane to Western Australia, and apart from the question of policy of competing against Australian interstate steamship owners, vessels trading overseas could not satisfactorily handle any material quantity of coastal cargo without interfering with the overseas itineraries."

CABLE CONNEXION.

Two submarine telegraph cables connect Flinders, Victoria, and Low Head, Tasmania. The cables are extended by land lines from Flinders to Melbourne Central Telegraph Office and from Low Head to Launceston Telegraph Office. Separate land lines are available from Launceston to Hobart for extension of one of the cables to the latter city. Each cable is worked on the duplex system, which permits the transmission of two messages simultaneously, one in each direction. High speed automatic repeaters are installed at Launceston to provide for Hobart working direct with Melbourne. To deal with press traffic handed in on the mainland for transmission to both Launceston and Hobart, provision is made at Launceston to permit of simultaneous reception at both Launceston and Hobart. The capacity of the cables has been found by the Postal Department to be adequate for the normal business offering, and is also sufficient to cope with reasonable increases in the normal loads of traffic. Delays, however, are occasionally experienced during heavy peak periods when large volumes of press matter reach the Melbourne office late in the evening for transmission to Tasmania. The Postal authorities point out that these delays would be considerably minimized if a portion of the traffic could be handed in during the afternoon or early in the evening instead of there being, as at present, a heavy peak load between 5 p.m. and midnight. The normal speed of Wheatstone working between Melbourne and Launceston is from 60 to 65 words per minute in each direction, and between Melbourne and Hobart 50 to 55 words per minute in each direction. The actual carrying capacity of the circuits for a period of twelve hours without interruption would consequently be 80,000 words between Melbourne and Launceston, and 72,000 between Melbourne and Hobart. As the average number of words transmitted in the busy twelve-hour period between Melbourne and Launceston is 23,000, and 22,000 between Melbourne and Hobart, it will consequently be seen that there is a substantial margin between the normal loads and the carrying capacity of the plant. Technical changes, the Committee was advised, are now being effected which, it is considered, will improve the service and get rid of the peak load more expeditiously. Inquiry by the Committee from press representatives elicited the information that, whilst the newspaper offices endeavour to get their matter despatched early, they are unable to avoid altogether the congestion which occurs at certain periods.

WIRELESS COMMUNICATION.

In view of the position regarding cable communication, the Postal Department considers there is little present justification for the establishment of a regular commercial radio-telegraphic service between Tasmania and the mainland. The establishment of a radio telephone service would, it is considered, be most advantageous, provided it could be conducted with a guarantee of reasonable secrecy. The Postal authorities have been studying this question for some time, and the Committee has been assured that when the project is regarded as being feasible, it will be established.

AERIAL SERVICE.

The practicability of the inauguration of an aerial service between the mainland and Tasmania was investigated by the Committee as another possible means of improving communications. Experimental flights have already been made, and much data on the subject accumulated. No technical or operational difficulties are anticipated, but a satisfactory type of triple-engined amphibian machine, it is stated, has yet to be perfected to make such a service a commercial undertaking. It is nevertheless anticipated that, should tenders be invited for an aerial service to Tasmania, two or three tenders would be received. Airships have been suggested as a means of crossing Bass Strait, but the Committee was informed that the journey across the Strait was too short to make the use of such craft a success, and, moreover, the cost of establishing and maintaining a base would be almost prohibitive.

COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

In approaching the question of what can be regarded as adequate communications between Tasmania and the mainland, it must be borne in mind that Tasmania, because of her comparative isolation and her separation by water from the mainland, is in a position entirely different from that of any other State of the Commonwealth, and it is on account of such special circumstances that efficient means of transport are essential if Tasmania is to develop and progress. The Commonwealth has already assisted Tasmania financially and has further expressed its intention of helping Tasmania to overcome her difficulties, to retain her population and to increase her production; but unless adequate, regular and continuous means of communication are provided to enable the products of the State to be readily and cheaply marketed, these efforts will be largely wasted. If the shipping facilities essential for the well being of Tasmania cannot

be made directly profitable, the Commonwealth should share the burden. It was clearly indicated throughout the evidence that witnesses realized the proposed improved services could not, at the outset, be regarded as sound commercial propositions, but, nevertheless, they were considered essential for the advancement of the State and as a natural corollary would result in benefit to the Commonwealth. The advent of the *Loonyana*, and, later, of the *Nairana* proved conclusively that improved services and better steamers mean increased trade and traffic generally.

In an endeavour to overcome its difficulties, the State of Tasmania some years ago established its own steamer service, but it was found that the expense was too great, and the fleet was disposed of with the exception of two vessels, which, though they call at Melbourne, have been kept in commission to maintain regular communication with King and Flinders Islands in Bass Strait, which are politically portion of the State of Tasmania. But whilst the maintenance of intra-state communication may be regarded as a matter for the State concerned, it must be acknowledged that certain obligations for providing and maintaining communications between Tasmania and the mainland rest upon the Commonwealth whether such communications be conducted directly by the Commonwealth or with the aid of a Commonwealth subsidy.

Independent steamship services cannot be maintained solely for mail purposes, and the frequency of the running and the class of steamer employed must be determined very largely on the basis of the amount of cargo and passenger traffic to and from Tasmania.

From the excellent opportunities afforded it during its recent extensive and intensive visit to practically all parts of Tasmania, the Committee is able to appreciate the difficulties with which that State has to contend and to recognize its possibilities, both as a productive area and as a tourist resort. During its visit, the Committee was favorably impressed by the fact that the efforts of the Commonwealth, through the Development and Migration Commission, to assist the primary producers to improve their methods of agriculture, &c., appeared to be well received, and that the State authorities, as well as the farmers themselves, were actively co-operating with the Commission.

Tasmania, as well as other States of the Commonwealth, though perhaps to a greater degree, has, in the opinion of the Committee, suffered as a result of the operation of the Navigation Act; its industries have been handicapped, the establishment of new businesses has been prevented, and, generally, the development of the State has been hindered. Not only has the Act failed in its purpose to create an Australian Mercantile Marine and to improve transport facilities, but it has, in effect, created two monopolies the interstate shipping companies on the one hand, and the seamen on the other. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the coasting trade sections of the Navigation Act be repealed.

To restore, in some measure, a service which Tasmania at one time enjoyed, and which it is considered will be well patronized, the Committee recommends the amendment of the mail contract with the Orient Steam Navigation Company to provide for an additional call at Hobart to be made during the peak of the tourist season when interstate passengers should be carried.

The heavy demand for passenger accommodation from Sydney to Hobart, particularly during the tourist season, and the serious complaints concerning the inadequacy of the present service indicate that an improvement is essential, and the Committee recommends that, unless relief is afforded by the suggested amendment of the Navigation Act, a seasonal subsidy, to operate for the months of December, January and February should be offered as an inducement to shipping companies to provide a better service on this route.

Having regard to the past history of the services connecting Hobart and Melbourne, the Committee is of opinion that the offering of a subsidy for the institution of a passenger service between Hobart and Melbourne is not at present justified.

In addition to the service connecting Sydney-Melbourne-Hobart-New Zealand—the reasons for the cessation of which have already been given—Melbourne and Hobart were some years ago, served by the New Zealand Shipping Company and the Shaw, Savill and Albion Line whose passenger steamers used to call at Hobart fortnightly en route to New Zealand, coming from London via the Cape, and when the Commonwealth framed its light dues, special provision was made for these Lines in an endeavour to retain them in the Tasmanian trade. The opening of the Panama Canal, however, considerably reduced the distance from Wellington to London and the steamers have since utilized that route.

Concerning the Bass Strait service, the Committee is of opinion that this important service should be improved, firstly, via Burnie, and by means of an 18-knot oil burning vessel, with adequate cargo space and at least half of its passenger accommodation in two-berth cabins;

the frequency of the service to be three trips weekly in summer, and two trips weekly in winter. The Committee recommends that public tenders should be called for the service proposed, and in order to attract competition, ample time should be allowed between the date of closing tenders and the commencement of the service to permit of the successful tenderer obtaining the necessary tonnage.

The Launceston service, the Committee considers, should continue as at present until better facilities are available in the River Tamar. The vessels on this run—*Nairana* and *Loongana*—still have a useful life, and are, moreover, the fastest steamers engaged in the Australian interstate trade. Larger vessels with more two-berth cabin accommodation and greater space for the conveyance of motor cars, should be procured when the present steamers are due for replacement, or even earlier, provided the navigation difficulties in the Tamar have been sufficiently overcome. The use of a tender is one of the greatest handicaps to the traffic entering and leaving Launceston and its early abolition is urged. It would also be a great advantage if oil-burning vessels were employed in this trade, and their use is recommended by the Committee. In this connexion, it is of interest to note that with the advent of the new motor passenger vessel *Mimipa* on the Port Adelaide to Port Lincoln run—a distance of approximately 165 miles—the time of the journey has been reduced from 16 or 17 hours to 12 hours, the steamer leaving one port at 7 p.m. and arriving at the other at 7 a.m. the following day. The conversion of the *Nairana* and *Loongana* into oil burners has been advocated, but on account of the age of the *Loongana*, it is doubtful whether the conversion of that vessel would be justified. Figures submitted to the Committee indicated that the cost of converting the *Nairana* would not be prohibitive, and that such action would result in lower running costs.

From the evidence placed before it, the Committee does not consider that the net return to the contractors from the present subsidized service to Tasmania can be regarded as unreasonable, but, nevertheless, it is of opinion that there should be no increase in present fares and freights.

In view of the progress made in civil aviation in Australia and the advantages which have accrued from the services already in operation, together with the advancement in the development of aircraft design and construction, the Committee is of opinion that the early inauguration of a subsidized aerial service to Tasmania should be seriously considered, with a view to its establishment as soon as efficient and suitable machines can be procured.

Walter Kingsmill WALTER KINGSMILL,

Chairman.

Office of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts,
Parliament House,
Canberra, 4th November, 1927.

MINORITY OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

Whilst agreeing with the majority of the Committee that adequate, regular and continuous means of communication are essential to the development and progress of Tasmania, I hold that it is the responsibility of the Commonwealth to provide and maintain such services in the same manner as the Commonwealth has undertaken the provision and maintenance of railway communication with the State of Western Australia. That the Commonwealth recognizes this responsibility is also evidenced by its participation in financing the construction of railways between mainland States—such as the Brisbane to Kyogle Line and by its policy of assisting the States to build main roads which in the case of the mainland States facilitate interstate transportation and communication. The fact that Tasmania is a maritime State, with the sea as its only means of access to the mainland, strengthens its claim to a full recognition of the Commonwealth's responsibilities.

In my opinion, the repeal of the coasting trade sections of the Navigation Act would not prove a remedy for Tasmania's disabilities or lead to the improved services desired by that State. The Act has already been amended to permit of certain British vessels participating in the tourist traffic between the mainland and Hobart, but the overseas companies have failed to avail themselves of the concession. How far such action has been influenced by the association between the British overseas companies and the Australian interstate companies is a matter for speculation, but it certainly appears contrary to business principles to decline to accept the opportunity to fill vacant berths and increase receipts. On the other hand, it was indicated in evidence that whilst partial and temporary exemptions were unacceptable, the overseas companies would no doubt adopt a different attitude were they given an entirely free hand in the passenger and cargo trade around the Australian coast. To permit such a state of affairs would, I contend, be obviously unfair and unjust. Statistics prove that, except for the demand for passenger accommodation during peak periods, the trade of Tasmania would not justify overseas vessels calling there throughout the year, with the result that these vessels would engage in the trade during the remunerative period and leave the local shipping companies to carry on the services and shoulder the losses during the slack months of the year. So long as Australian conditions and requirements are observed by the interstate shipping companies, it would be most inequitable to allow overseas companies, some of which employ coloured crews, and all of them operating on a much lower standard of conditions generally, to compete with the Australian companies who adhere to the White Australia policy, the requirements of the Navigation Act and the awards of the Arbitration Court. It must be remembered that the Navigation Act does not debar overseas companies from engaging in the interstate trade of Australia, but it does provide that, if they do so, they must compete on equal terms with the interstate companies.

Other maritime countries, it was pointed out to the Committee, have recognized the importance of preserving their local shipping, and the United States of America, France, Japan, Belgium, Spain, Russia, Portugal, Brazil, Argentine, Chili and Peru all reserve their coasting trade exclusively for their own vessels, whilst New Zealand, Canada, Sweden and Italy have passed legislation reserving their coasting trade to a greater or less extent.

The unsatisfactory nature of the present Bass Strait service is, I consider, due, in no small measure, to the absence of competition, as the interstate companies have divided the Australian coastal trade amongst themselves and will not invade each other's domain. In consequence, steamers, such as the *Oonah*, which should have been scrapped long since, and to a lesser degree, the *Loongana*, have been retained and proper consideration has not been given to the requirements of shippers or to the comfort of passengers. Many witnesses expressed the opinion it was highly undesirable that Tasmania should be entirely dependent upon practically one shipping company for services to the mainland. This much desired competition will not, I consider, be brought about by the repeal of the coasting trade sections of the Navigation Act, and in my opinion, the only way, under existing conditions, to overcome this difficulty, is for the shipping activities of the Commonwealth to be extended to provide a direct service between Tasmania and the mainland.

As a commencement, an improved service between Burnie and Melbourne should be instituted by means of an up-to-date cargo and passenger oil-burning steamer with a speed of at least 18 knots, which should make three (3) trips weekly in summer and two (2) trips weekly in winter. Details as to the type of steamer should, however, form the subject of consultation with the Tasmanian authorities. In recommending that the first service should be to Burnie, I

have in mind the fact that Burnie is the nearest deep-water port to the mainland, and possesses many advantages, being devoid of navigation difficulties and having good wharfage accommodation; moreover, mails and passengers landed there can reach all parts of the State within a day. Improved rail services from Burnie would undoubtedly overcome many of the present objections by travellers to the use of the Melbourne-Burnie route.

A vessel suitable for trading to the North-West Coast of Tasmania is, however, not necessarily capable of satisfactory service on the Launceston route, owing to the restrictions at present imposed upon draught and length of vessel by the existing conditions in the River Tamar. These conditions are receiving serious attention by the local authorities, and when the difficulties have been overcome or facilities are available to permit of the employment of better and larger vessels, I recommend that steamers of an improved type be brought into that service.

In conducting a Commonwealth service to maintain communication between the mainland and Tasmania, I am of opinion that the steamers should be manned by personnel subject to Commonwealth Public Service legislation—just as the Commonwealth railways are conducted under their own regulations and by-laws with certain rights and privileges accruing to the employees for service rendered. In the Customs, Navigation and Lighthouse services of the Commonwealth, sea-going personnel are already employed and the addition of a Tasmanian service should present no difficulties.

E. C. Riley E. C. RILEY.

As I did not become a member of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts until the evidence of this inquiry had been closed, I had not an opportunity of hearing the evidence tendered; but from a perusal of it, I desire to signify my agreement with the views of Mr. E. C. Riley.

A. A. Hoare A. A. HOARE.

Canberra, 4th November, 1927.