

1924
~~1923~~

KENYA

C. O.
7117
13 FEB 24

DATE

12TH FEBRUARY 1924

HOUSE OF COMMONS

CIRCULATION: -

UASIN GISHU RAILWAY

Asst. U.S. of S.

See Mr. Ross
13/II/24

Pres. U.S. of S.

*217. Mr. Hope Simpson.—To ask the Secretary of State for the Colonies, whether an inquiry was conducted, and a report submitted by Colonel Robertson, on the subject of alternative routes for the Uasin Gishu railway; what were the reasons which determined the Government to adopt the Nakuru route rather than the Mau route; and whether he will place the Report by Colonel Robertson and Reports on the subject submitted by the technical advisers of the Kenya government on the table in the Library for the information of the Members of this House. [Monday 18th February.]

Asst. U.S. of S.

Secretary of

Pres.

Q.

53875
-23 - (Ross) *Cald*

oral reply

We should be careful not to be dragged into any controversy on this question, which is entirely a matter of feud between Mr. McGregor Ross and Colonel Robertson. See the annexed paper (R/58826/23) regarding Mr. Ross's demand for papers in order that he mightpillory Colonel Robertson before the Institute of Civil Engineers.

The history of the feud is briefly that Colonel Robertson was made Chairman of a Commission of Enquiry into the Public Works Department, of which Mr. MacGregor Ross was Director, and that his report contained criticisms, sound or unsound, of Mr. Ross's administration. On the top of that, when the question of constructing the first part of the Thika-Nyeri extension was under consideration early in 1922,

copy of a paper - 21 Feb 24

Subsequent Paper

See H.R.
5872

1922, the Secretary of State telegraphed to the Governor asking whether he considered that the retrenched members of the P.W.D. staff were capable of carrying on the work. The Governor telegraphed back that, after consulting Colonel Robertson, he considered that the staff were not capable, and this telegram, becoming known without its context, gave Mr. Ross the idea that Colonel Robertson had expressed the opinion that the P.W.D. as a whole were not competent to carry on railway construction.

Soon afterwards Mr. Ross retired on pension and is now out for 1000.

Coming to the matter dealt with in the Question, Colonel Robertson, as Engineer-in-charge of Railway Surveys, investigated various routes for the Uasin Gishu Railway, and he compared the merits, from an engineering and financial point of view, of ⁽ⁱ⁾ a line leaving the main Uganda Railway at Nakuru at the bottom of the Rift Valley, and of a line ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ leaving the main line further on at the top of the Mau escarpment. His report was examined by Colonel Hammond, who had recently returned from special investigation of railway matters in East Africa, and by the Consulting Engineers. They both had criticisms of detail to make on Colonel Robertson's figures, but it was on their ^{joint} ~~final~~ advice that the S. of S.

decided

*plus a short branch line
from Nakuru for
local purposes*

decided to approve of the Nakuru route. 302
Mr. McGregor Ross's case is that Colonel
Robertson's advice was open to still further
criticism than that which it got, and that
the result would have been to turn the scale
in favour of the Mau route. It is a matter
in which the inspection of a map tends
to favour of Mr. McGregor Ross's
proposed lines, the old and the
new, are parallel to each other
up to a distance of 10 miles, at which the
two routes are only about 10 miles apart.
The additional factors which have to be borne
in mind are, particularly, that the new route
is expected to be productive of traffic at
every point; and that it passes at the foot
instead of at the top of the Eldama Forest,
which, if workable at all, must presumably
be developed so as to allow all the timber
to be taken up to the top of the forest. It is to be
noted that the results of the 1915 survey of
the Nakuru route (saw mills, etc. have
been placed at the bottom); and that the
route of the Mau escarpment would require
a great deal of regrading,
etc. before it could be made a through
route.

It is absolutely useless to re-open
the question, as the new line has already
proceeded far beyond the region of the Mau
escarpment, and Colonel Robertson's purely
temporary appointment in Kenya is coming to
an end. In any case his advice, good or
bad, was fully considered and acted upon by
the responsible authorities, and it would be
contrary to all tradition of the Public

Service for the authorities responsible for taking the advice to throw the adviser to the wolves.

The answer given in August 1922

(Official Report 2nd August 1922, Column 1453)

contains all that should be said, and I suggest that it should be ^{used} ~~paraphrased~~ as in the draft which I annex.

W.C.S. 13.2.24.

The Uganda R.R. on its present alignment runs more than 2000 ft. in the +3 miles between Nakuru & Marsa. The steam feeder branch has been laid out on various gradients with a view to its forming a link in the first trunk line which will eventually connect the coast with the Congo frontier. If the present section of the Uganda R.R. between Nakuru & Marsa were to be laid out on similar gradients most of Mr. Rossi's economic objections disappear. ~~Should all the various other reports for the Uganda R.R. be done under the~~

Additional minute

H. J. R.

13/2/24

Revises the portions of Col. Robertson's figures, it has been alleged that the Nakuru route was chosen to please Major Eryuan and Lord Delamare.

(a) Major Eryuan was the original Commissioner of the port referred

to in my minute. It is now in the hands of a Company. Nothing to do with the previous committee on this point.

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(A) Lord Delamare received, in the days of F.O. control, a grant of 100,000 acres, much of which lies in the area served by the Nakuru route. It has not been considered necessary to examine the exact facts, but my impression

- (i) that he has got rid of most or all of this particular land and
- (ii) the Nakuru branch line, which would have been built if the Marsa route, had been chosen for the extension, would equally have served this area.

Official Report 16th February
W.C.S. 13.2.24
H. J. R.

EAST AFRICAN RAILWAY

Mr. SIMPSON asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether an inquiry was conducted, and a Report submitted by Colonel Robertson, on the subject of alternative routes for the East African railway - what were the reasons which determined the Government to adopt the Nakuru route rather than the Marsa route and whether he will place the Report by Colonel Robertson and Reports on the subject submitted by the technical advisers of the Kenya Government on the Table in the Library for the information of the Members of this House.

Mr. THOMAS: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given on the 2nd August, 1922, by the then Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, in which he stated that Colonel Robertson's recommendation of the Nakuru route was supported by the general manager of the Uganda Railway, by Colonel Hammond (the Special Commissioner sent out by Viscount Milner to examine railway questions generally in East Africa), and by the consulting engineers in this country, as well as by the Governor of Kenya, with the unanimous concurrence of his Executive Council. The railway has already been constructed in accordance with these recommendations, and I see no reason for inquiring further into the matter.

Partly 11/3/25 Jm.

W.C.S.
19.2.24
all

Sir H. Wood

Lord Amuloh

Secy of State

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As regards supplementaries, I think that the Secretary of State would be justified in asking for notice on the ground that he has had many other matters to give first attention to during the three weeks he has been in Office; but I append the following suggestions:-

- Q. Has it not been established that Colonel Robertson made a mess of this matter?
- A. I cannot admit that, and I suggest that a supplementary question should not be used in order to make a personal attack.
- Q. Is Colonel Robertson to be employed on future railway surveys?
- A. No, as they will be carried out under the direct supervision of the General Manager.
- Q. Was the route chosen so to serve private interests?
- A. No. It was chosen as passing through probable sources of new traffic and as providing the best through route to Uganda.
- Q. How much money has been wasted through the choice of route?
- A. The question presupposes that there has been a waste of money. The financial arguments for one route or the other turned ultimately on a relatively small difference

13/11/14

H. J. J.

16/11/14