

343/34

23rd. April, 1934.

The Honorable
The Assistant Minister in Charge of Sustenance,
MELBOURNE.

Sir/

While the policy of the Government that all able-bodied men should do useful work in return for sustenance is heartily approved and supported as pointed out in my letter of the 20th. inst., difficulties have arisen in regard to financing the cost of the scheme of providing work for men on sustenance of whom there are in this City still 650.

For the purpose of providing winter work in Melbourne, the Government has on the recommendation of the Employment Council recently made a Free Grant of the whole labor cost of certain storm drainage work to be done in various suburbs of Melbourne by the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works.

In Bendigo, there is an area in which polluted drainage from the houses renders the channels and water courses highly insanitary. This area is a low level area situated between two sewered areas free from such pollution. This polluted drainage cannot, however, be effectively dealt with in any way except by constructing a new independent Branch Sewer from the Main Outfall Sewer into this low-lying area, but there is no possibility of this being done under ordinary conditions of cost as the locality is so thinly populated that a Sewerage Rate of 4/6d. in the £ over the area would be required to cover Interest and Sinking Fund on the capital cost of sewers alone.

By constructing a New Branch Sewer into this area, useful work would be provided for unskilled sustenance workers in making the excavations which would all be shallow. The Bendigo Sewerage Authority is prepared to bear the cost of all skilled labor, supervision, materials, cartage etc. This cost is estimated at £1,220, and the cost for ordinary unskilled labor at £1,980 in addition. This sum, £1,980, would provide three months winter work at present sustenance rates for 150 men (with dependents) working one week in every three, the present rate for sustenance workers.

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The Honorable
The Assistant Minister in Charge of Sustenance - (Contd.)

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Two alternatives for financing this proposal are suggested. These are:-

1. That the excavation work (only) be made an approved sustenance work, or
2. That a Free Grant of the unskilled sustenance labor cost be made to the Sewerage Authority on the condition (if desired) that all unskilled men employed should be engaged through either (a) the local Sustenance Office, or (b) the Local Labor Bureau, and on the understanding (if desired) that none of these men would be given more than one week's work in every three weeks (or any other proportion you may consider advisable).

This second alternative would attain the same result as the first, i.e., providing some winter work for the largest possible number of men without making work on sewers actual sustenance work. /8

Approval to one or the other of these proposals would greatly assist in overcoming the difficulties set out in my letter of the 20th. inst.

I might also point out that the manufacture of materials for this work (principally sewer pipes made in Bendigo) will at once provide additional employment at full wages (besides the skilled labor on sewer construction before mentioned) while the subsequent sewerage of the houses will, of course, employ still more local labor at full wages for both the making of pipes and the construction work from the expenditure of private capital involved.

Consideration of this request at as early a date as possible is desirable as surveys and plans would have to be made before any work could begin. The matter is, therefore, urgent if useful winter work is to be provided by undertaking this proposal.

Yours faithfully,

TOWN CLERK.

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"Unless one or other of these proposals meets w. approval, my Cl. is of opinion that it will be quite impossible to provide useful work at Bp. for all the best workers this winter as the Govt. very wisely desires."

Send down Govt. original
See 20.03.34
in printed file