

Executive Department

Milledgeville March 7th 1864

His Excellency Jefferson Davis.(?)

Dear Sir

Your letter of Feby 17th is now before me, and it affords me an opportunity of which I now avail myself of correcting an error which I find by inference(?) to the reports and information I have since received from the officers of the Road I had fallen into, as to the loss of the Engine, I know that all the late statements from the officers, in charge of the Road, showed the loss of over 200 of our cars, while in Confederate service under direction(?) of Confederate officers, and I took it for granted that a like proportion of Engines had been lost with the cars. I am now informed however that our cars were carried out on the Memphis + Charleston Road for the assistance of Genl. A. (I? J? L? S?) Johnston by Engines belonging to that Road, and not by State Road Engines, and that the losses on the other Road, have been of cars carried off by their Engines and in charge of their Con-duction + Engineers action under military direction. I cheerfully(?) make the correction as I have no disposition to misrepresent or exag[g]erate our severe loses.

The report of the officers in charge of Railroads to you would have some reason in it, if it were not true as it is, that a very large proportion of our cars and Engines are so much worn by the heavy drafts made upon both, to do not only the transportation of the Road proper, but Military transportation on other Roads as to under (there??) very [reliable?? No clue]

[Next page]

conduction of our Road in Confederate service, upon application made for each favor in view as stated of the necessity of each labor in keeping up the Road, and transporting military supplies for this army. It is proper in this [connection? Communication?] that I say that Genl Johnston has made no such refusal.

To that part of the correspondence which seems to be intended to charge bad management of the State Road under my control I can only say that this charge has been made in this state by my ene-mies and has entered as an element of oppositions to me before the people of the state and I have been sustained over every opponent by a vote with which I felt that I had no reason to be dissatisfied.

I trust the management of the State Road will not suffer by comparison with the management which lost us New Orleans and opened the Mississippi to the enemy, which lost us Fort Donaldson & gave them Nashville, which kept the army(?) too weak to deflect both, and which opened Georgia to attack, by dividing our army(?) at Missionary Bridge in the face of a superior force of the enemy.

But I prefer to pass these errors which have cost the people of the Confederacy so much loss of life and property without further remark. I should not have alluded to them here had I not been convinced of a purpose in your correspondence which I had not heretofore supposed you entertained.

In conclusion I beg leave to renew(?) my application to you to do me the justice to return to the State Road part of the rolling(?) stock your officers have caused us to lose, and to reassure you that we can not without this justice

[Next page]

It would have been but reasonable to suppose that an officer(?) in charge of the Railroad transportation of the Confederacy would have known a fact, known to every business man of the country to be true of all the Roads, and that some mention would have been made of it in a report as to the capacity of a particular Road.

Your Excellency doubtless seeing this injustice, is pleased to close your letter by saying “If it is foreseen that all the Railroads of the Country must be subject to some embarrass-ment from the War and occasional destruction of their rolling(??) stock and that constant effort will be required to replace such losses by repairing and building new Engines & cars.”

You do not mention in this communication when the material to be used in “repairing and building new Engines and Cars” is to be had.

Confederate officers have the control of almost all of the iron Mills in the Confederacy, and it is next to impossible for the Rail-road superintendents to get their consent to get from the Mills the smallest amount of material with which repairs absolutely necessary to the present use of the road can be made. I have found very great embarrassment on this account in keeping the State Road in running condition; after I had furnished iron to lay the track on the branch(???) Road from the State Road to the Etowah works without which the work could not have been successfully con-ducted at the rolling(?) mills and while I was transporting all the stone coal used in the manufacture of the iron, in con-sideration of which I had the obligation of the Company to sell to the Road all the iron necessary for the use of the Road.

Nor has this been all the difficulty with which we have had to contend as those under your command have express-ly refused(?) to detail or discharge good [machinishst? Mechanists? Machinists?] and old

[Next page]

Continue to transport your supplies promptly, if the army should be heavily reinforced and should be able to advance/

Very Respectfully

You obdt servant

Joseph E. Brown