

venience of people by running trains to the suburbs—special trains frequently—and thereby create a large amount of traffic. The same principle would apply on the Wellington and Hutt line.

729. Are you aware where railways have been established some time without getting an increased traffic, that steps have been taken to create a traffic by giving people free passes for a certain period?—I do not know if that is the case. I know companies have offered some very extraordinary inducements by fixing the fares at a low rate, but I do not know that they have ever gone to the length of carrying people free.

730. *Mr. Macandrew.*] Supposing your firm leased the Hutt Railway, and you had the management of it, would you work it differently to the manner in which it is being worked now?—That is a question which I should not like to answer without some little consideration; but I am sure if the principle I have referred to were carried out, and attempts were made to secure all the traffic by offering liberal inducements to those who might travel upon and send their goods by the trains, that much would be done to establish the prosperity of the line.

731. Did you retain in your hands the power of fixing the fares upon the Auckland and Onehunga line without any control being exercised by the Government?—Yes.

732. *Mr. Wood.*] There was not a very large goods traffic on the line?—No; only 2,200 tons were carried. We did not lay ourselves out for it.

733. You had very little station accommodation?—No; the station buildings were scarcely finished. Temporary station offices were put up by us.

734. What were your charges to Onehunga for passengers?—Single first-class tickets were 1s. 6d.; single second-class, 1s.; returns were 2s. 3d. and 1s. 6d. respectively.

735. And how many passengers did you carry?—61,700 is the exact number.

736. That is during four months?—Yes.

737. What alterations did the Government make in these prices?—I cannot say what was done immediately after the Government took the line over. The present fares are:—First-class, 1s.; second-class, 9d.; returns, 1s. 9d. and 1s. 3d. That is a reduction of 60 per cent.

738. And they carried half the number last year that you carried in four months?—I cannot say. I have not the figures.

*The Chairman:* The total number of passengers carried on the line is set down at about 104,000.

739. *Mr. Wood.*] And you carried 61,700 in four months?—Yes.

740. Did you make it pay?—Yes; to the extent I have stated.

741. And the Government do not make it pay?—I believe not.

742. How do you account for that?—Because there has been dissatisfaction on the part of the public at the rates charged; and they have not supported the railway as they would otherwise have done.

743. You ran a great many Sunday trains?—Yes.

744. Did you make any difference in the fares?—No.

745. Are you aware whether there are any Sunday trains running now?—Two a day, I believe.

746. You used to run trains every half-hour I believe?—About every three-quarters of an hour.

747. And they were crowded?—Yes.

748. That was so for a period of four months?—Yes.

749. Do you think if the same firm again got the railway, and again acted upon the principle of studying the convenience of the public, instead of binding their officers down with red-tape regulations that they could again make the line pay?—I have no doubt that if the present arrangements were considerably modified, so as to meet the interests of the travelling public, there would be, instead of a loss, a large profit.

750. *Hon. Mr. Ormond.*] You say our fares were made the same as were charged when your firm had the Auckland line?—Yes.

751. They were not altered?—I think not.

752. What was your practice with regard to excursion trains? Did you cheapen the fares for them?—Yes.

753. Did you run the trains as excursion trains?—Yes, they were called excursion trains. They were placed on the time-table as pleasure trains.

754. To where did you run them principally?—Only to Ellerslie and Onehunga. There was very little intermediate traffic at any time.

755. You consider the Government injured the prospect of profit on the line by reducing the number of trains run on the line?—Yes. I know the number of trains run was considerably reduced. I am not able to say anything as to the extent of the reduction, but I know that was one of the grounds of complaint. When it was found certain trains did not pay, they were immediately taken off, which created a great deal of dissatisfaction. It was no doubt done for the best.

756. How long was it before the Government reduced their fares?—At least six months, I should think. It should be said, in justice to the parties who took the line over—Mr. Passmore having only just arrived—that everything was in confusion for a time. That had been one of the causes which led to our taking over and working the line for a time.

757. Can you tell the Committee how much of the passenger traffic was excursion traffic?—We did not classify the returns. I have no doubt, however, that a great portion of it was excursion traffic, and I believe the same thing could be repeated if sufficient inducements were held out.

758. You spoke of the traffic you had made in running trains to meet the steamers: was it lucrative?—Not necessarily. It was done for the convenience of passengers.

759. The traffic was mainly to Onehunga?—I might say only to Ellerslie and Onehunga.

760. You did not get any intermediate traffic from the suburbs?—No; there was nothing worth speaking of at any other stations. Seven-eighths of the traffic was between Auckland and Onehunga.

761. *Mr. Stevens.*] In the offer made by Messrs. Brogden to lease this line for three years, were they to maintain the line and rolling-stock in perfect order?—Certainly; to the satisfaction of the Resident Engineer.