

this case, or would you have it left to the discretion of the Manager, and, as the particular case in point turned up, that he should have power to fix the rate?—Yes, it would be very desirable. There are many cases in which we could run a special train at a very nominal cost. We might have a load for the train, and it would not inconvenience the party having a special to have the goods taken on with it. We have done that frequently under the old Provincial arrangement—put a goods train backwards or forwards.

1240. What course would you suggest as being the best for the Government to adopt for managing the railways and putting the Manager in a position of doing the best for the public?—There should be a minimum charge fixed and understood, and it should be left to the discretion of the Manager to regulate the charges according to circumstances. 25 per cent. might be too much, but there should, I think, be a distinction made between the charge for a train one way and a train for the double journey. I should charge that 25 per cent. as detention.

1241. There was some evidence given by another witness with regard to the question of interference in Lyttelton of the Harbour Board with the railway working. Are you aware of any order having been given or a request made by the Harbour Board to the railway to have the wharves absolutely cleared of trucks at night?—Yes, I am aware that such a request was made by the Harbour Board that the wharves should be cleared every night—that trucks on the outer lines should be removed to the inner lines to give free access to the ships.

1242. Was that order given merely to clear the gangways?—I understood it applied to the whole line, and in my reply I recommended that gaps should be left for the gangways. That was agreed to. I understood they wished in the first instance to have the whole lines cleared.

1243. *Mr. Wood.*] Your experience is confined to the Southern lines?—Yes.

1244. Where there is a very considerable amount of all sorts of traffic?—Yes.

1245. You said you thought it would be advisable, as a rule, not to encourage special trains?—I did.

1246. How about lines on which there is very little traffic? Would you not encourage all the traffic you could get?—That is quite true.

1247. Then your remark does not apply to the Northern lines?—It applies to my own district.

1248. Would it not be advisable to encourage special trains as much as possible on a line like the Auckland and Mercer, where two trains run each way per day—morning and evening?—There would be no objection at all, because the line is free.

1249. In that case would you apply those charges you mentioned to a line of that kind?—There would be a question of uniformity again.

1250. Would you sacrifice everything to uniformity?—My own individual opinion is that I would not.

1251. When Mr. Passmore was at Auckland we discovered that the absolute outside cost to the Government, including wear and tear, was nine guineas for a train running between Auckland and Mercer. The Government charge is £32 5s. for the same thing. Do you not think that an awful disproportion between the actual cost to the Government and the amount charged for running a special train there and back, and keeping it within the day?—Yes, I do. I think that would be rather excessive, according to my ideas of it. The amount chargeable for such a distance as that would be about £28, or £24 without the return journey.

1252. Even that is more than anybody likes to give. £20 has been frequently offered and refused. Do you not think it would be very well if they got £20 for what costs only nine guineas?—That would do very well for a line where the traffic is small, and the line free.

1253. *Hon. Mr. Richardson.*] That is, supposing there is a staff unoccupied and ready to go to work?—It would be so in this case, because the driver is paid for ten hours. There would be no additional cost to the department for labour.

1254. How can a man who is running with an ordinary train take a special from Auckland to Mercer, and remain at the beck and call of the person taking the special?—I did not mean to say that for a long distance it could be done with no additional expense. I meant that it would not necessitate an extra shilling for labour in the case of short distances, where the driver of an ordinary train would have time to take charge of a special between times.

1255. *Mr. Stevens.*] Can you give the Committee an idea of what you would consider to be a reasonable allowance for depreciation. I am speaking of a constructed line in full working order?—That is out of my department, and I have no information to guide me in expressing an opinion. I do not know what is done in that way in the other colonies or at Home.

1256. Did the question engage the attention of the Commission?—No.

1257. *The Chairman.*] I wish to ask you, in continuation of Mr. Wood's question, whether you consider this item of £6 6s. for wear and tear a fair charge?—I think I have answered that through Mr. Stevens. It is not a matter which comes within my department; it is scarcely a traffic matter. It is close upon 1s. 6d. per mile for wear and tear, and I should think that rather excessive.

1258. Do you not think that such a rate would swallow up the whole of the earnings of the line?—I think so. It seems an excessive amount.

1259. If a similar rate were charged in respect of all trains run, the charge for depreciation on this line would be twelve guineas a day?—Yes.

1260. How much would that amount to in the year?—3,744 guineas.

1261. You have stated it would be unfair to compare the July returns of 1876 with the July returns of 1877—that is for passenger traffic?—I spoke of June.

1262. I thought you referred to July?—Perhaps it would apply in the same way.

1263. Then why do you consider it would be unfair?—Because it was understood towards the end of June that the Government were about to discontinue the Saturday single-fare return tickets, and a large number of persons in the country availed themselves of the opportunity of cheaper fares to come into town in large numbers on those last two Saturdays. No doubt they were tempted to do so, owing to the paragraphs which appeared in the papers that those two Saturdays would be the last upon which they would be able to travel at cheap fares.

*Mr. Lawson.*

1st Sept., 1877.