

Mr. Dobson.
 24th Sept., 1877.

2024. Then, to clear the line, you must have greater speed or double lines?—Either of the two. You must either have a double line or greater speed.

2025. Would you advise a second line?—I should double the lines where the traffic was heaviest, and put in additional sidings to allow of trains passing on long lengths, where it is not yet necessary to lay a double line.

2026. What is a fair rate of working expenses relatively to gross earnings?—From my general experience of railway management, I think it should not exceed 60 per cent. If it exceeds that, I think there is something wrong.

2027. Would that be modified by exceptional circumstances?—Yes; there might be an exceptional traffic, which it would be worth while to secure at considerable expense, so long, of course, as you were working at a profit.

2028. As regards the question of rails, Mr. Dobson, you are aware that the present intention is to lay 52-lb. rails. What do you consider a sufficient weight of rail?—It depends entirely on the number of sleepers. I think 45 lbs. is the lightest rail you can work economically—from that up to 62 lbs. That is a very fair range for flanged rails.

2029. Have you had any experience of steel rails?—They are either very good or very bad. If hard and brittle they are objectionable; but there is a tough class of steel which makes exceedingly valuable rails, and wears very well indeed.

2030. Assuming that the right class of steel rails were obtainable, would you recommend them?—Not as a general thing. I think it would be worth while in tunnels and curves, but I do not think the traffic in New Zealand is likely to be heavy enough for years to make the expense advisable in other cases.

2031. What would be the difference between the cost of steel and iron rails?—It just depends on the state of the market. We have had rails at £21 per ton. It depends entirely on the state of the iron market. As a general rule it may be laid down as a principle that, for curves and places where the wear and tear is great, it is always advisable to put down steel rails.

2032. Have you formed any opinion about the sale of railway tickets otherwise than at stations?—I would not sell them at any place but the stations. But I would have them always on sale at the stations. In selling elsewhere, I think there is a risk of forgery.

2033. Explain as to keeping them open at the stations?—That there should be always an office at each principal station, which should never be closed during ordinary working hours, say from 9 to 6. By this means, very great inconvenience might be avoided; for it is a great inconvenience to keep passengers waiting at the ticket window when there is a rush of traffic, as I have seen on the Hobson's Bay Railway for instance. On the other hand, if you allow tickets to be sold like postage stamps, there is a very great risk of forgery, and, although this is discovered as soon as duplicate numbers come in, it may go on for a long time without discovery, and great loss ensue.

2034. Do you think it is better to get stores required for the use of the railways from England or to obtain them in the colony?—I should obtain them in the colony. I see no difficulty in making contracts with merchants, and you do not then need to keep any large stock in hand, nor do you require so much storage, and you incur less loss and waste from depreciation of stock. Generally, you would only require storage for a month's supply. I do not think there is much difficulty in getting a good class of stores here. We did not find any difficulty in Melbourne. We ordered the stores week by week, or whenever we wanted them from the contractors.

2035. With regard to the parcel-delivery system, are you familiar with such?—No; I am not.

2036. Can you give any opinion upon that?—My opinion is that the railway authorities should complete the delivery of parcels. I think the railway authorities should contract for such delivery. That system is adopted in Victoria, and seems successful.

2037. The Government are primarily responsible, and they should hold their contractors responsible?—Just so.

2038. Are you of opinion, Mr. Dobson, that all rolling-stock should be made in New Zealand?—No; certainly not. Imported engines have an advantage in workmanship; but, I think, there is always an advantage in building wagons in the locality of the line for which they are required.

2039. Could you tell me whether you know if any system is in force on the Victorian lines, or on any other colonial line you may be familiar with, providing for accidents to the railway employés?—That I cannot tell you.

2040. Has the Hobson's Bay Company any such provision?—They have a sick fund, to which every man contributes 1s. a week.

2041. A benefit society?—A benefit society.

2042. Is that subsidized by the Board?—Yes; but I cannot tell you to what extent.

2043. In case of accident what provision is made then?—I think there have been always sufficient funds with the subsidy.

2044. Can you inform us as to the details?—I am not familiar with the details, except that there are always ample funds.

2045. You are not aware whether there is any system of a similar kind on the Victorian Government lines?—I believe so, but I believe it is entirely private; I cannot say positively. On the Hobson's Bay line the funds have always proved ample.

2046. Have you formed any opinion of New Zealand coal?—I have not tried it. The Greymouth coal is good, and appears to be similar to the Newcastle coal; but I should not like to say its capacity for generating steam without testing it. I do not know the Buller coal. There is some coal at Cragieburn which, I think, could be made to answer (I have used it for blacksmiths' work on the West Coast road), although not nearly so good as Newcastle coal.

2047. Can you give any opinion as to weigh-notes respecting the weight of goods, and the Government undertaking to give weight of goods?—I do not see how you can charge by weight without weighing. I have received large quantities of heavy goods by rail in Victoria, and have always received a note of their weight.