

Mr. Dobson.
24th Sept., 1877.

2075. Do you consider that the reserve fund should provide for the increase in the number of vehicles, or only for repairs?—I think it should provide for repairs and renewals. In other words, I think you should close the capital account as soon as possible. I think that is the conclusion arrived at at Home—to close the capital account and provide year by year for repairs and renewals.

2076. Do you consider that in New Zealand, where we are only opening it up, that the same rule should apply?—Yes, I think so.

2077. *The Acting-Chairman.*] Have the questions put to you touched all points on which you can give information on the general subject of this inquiry?—I was much struck when in Victoria by the difference between the management of Hobson's Bay and the Government lines. In the Government lines there are so many different heads of sub-departments. The reason of the financial success of the Hobson's Bay Company is its administrative organization. There is the Secretary and the Engineer, who have each their own subordinates, who know whom to look to for instructions. On the Victorian Government lines there are such a number of heads that there is no real discipline.

2078. You are speaking of the practical working of the line?—Yes, for example, the guards are under one head, and the drivers under another. A driver will be anxious to start his train, and will call to the guard to hasten the passengers. The guard will simply swear at him, and say that he has nothing to do with him.

2079. *Mr. Macandrew.*] You think that the fewer cooks there are the better, judging from your experience?—Exactly; all the servants should be amenable to thorough control—to immediate suspension for misbehaviour, and dismissal if necessary. In Victoria, if a drunken fireman is dismissed, there might be forty members of Parliament to call for an inquiry.

2080. Suppose the New Zealand railways were your private property, how would you work them?—I do not know what the present arrangements are; but generally speaking, I should adopt the system of the Hobson's Bay Railway Company. The Engineer has under him an Inspector of Trains and an Inspector of the Permanent-way, who has signalmen and pointsmen under him. When I was there, if any irregularity occurred in the working of the trains, it was immediately reported to the Engineer's office, where a clerk was engaged all day long in booking the guards' returns as they came in on time-tables specially prepared for the purpose, which were inspected by me every morning.

2081. Then you were Engineer of the line?—Yes.

2082. What experience of railway engineering have you had?—I have been connected with railways for the last thirty years, in surveys, construction, and Parliamentary proceedings.

2083. *Mr. Richardson.*] Do you consider it necessary that a responsible person should walk over the line every day?—Certainly; a foreman platelayer. Twice a day if in wet weather.

2084. About what lengths do you consider right for a foreman platelayer to have under his charge?—Not less than three, certainly not more than ten, miles.

2085. *Mr. Macandrew.*] A man could do ten miles a day?—Certainly; with a trolley. He would not walk that distance. He would have men under him to report any spot requiring repair. When he received a report he would go to examine what was required.

2086. *Mr. Larnach.*] Who is the engineer of the Hobson's Bay railway line?—Mr. Ellsdon; he is a mechanical engineer.

2087. *Mr. Richardson.*] Do you consider it necessary that the guard should be always in attention to his brake?—No.

2088. If under the system of management an examination of tickets is required, you would allow him to leave the brake to look after the tickets?—I think a guard can always manage to find time on a piece of straight line to check the tickets.

2089. *The Acting-Chairman.*] In connection with the same subject, your experience of traffic is very large indeed?—Yes; of passenger traffic.

2090. *Mr. Macandrew.*] Have you read the printed regulations for the guidance of all the officers?—No. [The witness here remarked that when he had charge of the Hobson's Bay line the traffic was 93,000 passengers per week; it was now 150,000. They were now taking £2,500 per week for goods and passengers].

2091. *Mr. Richardson.*] Your reason for thinking that the guard can inspect the tickets is that the slow rate of speed will permit it?—Yes; a driver can generally pull up; and, again, the country is very thinly peopled. I think the case in the towns is quite different.

2092. *Mr. Larnach.*] If the place was thickly peopled and the traffic large?—Then, I think, if you have the American system, you should have a ticket collector.

2093. To have two systems would be difficult?—I do not think so. It seems to me you can arrange your officers according to the nature of your traffic.

2094. *Mr. Richardson.*] Can you tell the Committee whether in Victoria it is the custom still to import any portion of the work for the carriages and wagons?—Yes.

2095. What portions?—I cannot say; but they import largely. The Home-manufactured engines are the best. It has been tried to make them in the colony. They have been making them in Ballarat, but certainly not satisfactorily.

2096. Have you seen the last report of the Victorian railway line, Mr. Dobson?—No. The Hobson's Bay line paid last half-year 10 per cent., with a bonus of 5s. per share, and carried £10,000 to the reserve fund.

2097. *Mr. Macandrew.*] What did the Hobson's Bay line cost?—I have not the slightest idea. It is a most expensive line, having many iron bridges, deep cuttings, and other expensive works.

2098. *Mr. Richardson.*] On the subject of classification of goods, have you had sufficient experience to give an opinion as to whether it is advisable to have an elaborate classification for the guidance of the Stationmasters and generally?—I think it is desirable to have an alphabetical arrangement, so that the Stationmaster can turn at once to see what he wants. The Victorian Government schedule is most elaborate.

2099. Then your opinion is that the larger the classification the better?—Yes; it gives some trouble at first to prepare, but it is very desirable. You begin at A and end at Z.