

2100. What is your opinion as to return tickets?—I object to return tickets totally.

2101. What would you do then, maintain single tickets?—I should reduce the single tickets and do away with the return tickets. I think there are certain cases in which you may have a reduced charge. You might have market trains for instance, and I would not ask a woman whether she was going to market, but, if she chose to travel by the market train, I would take her at the reduced rate.

2102. *The Acting-Chairman.*] Can you say what you think, in this country, would be a satisfactory rate?—It should not exceed 2d.

2103. First class?—No, second.

2104. 2½d. for first class?—Yes. And I would have a third class. I think the great bulk of the people would then go at the 2d. rate.

2105. Would you put a third class on all trains?—No.

*Mr. Dobson.*

24th Sept., 1877.

TUESDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER, 1877.

Mr. WILLIAM STONE examined.

*Mr. Stone.*

25th Sept., 1877.

2106. *The Acting-Chairman.*] Will you state what your present position is?—General Manager, Wellington-Masterton Railway.

2107. Are you an engineer?—Yes.

2108. Mechanical or civil?—Mechanical.

2109. Will you state what experience you had prior to your present engagement?—Previous to coming to Wellington I was for nearly two years on the railway in Taranaki; previous to that I was eight years on the North British Railway.

2110. In what capacity?—As engineer in the locomotive department; and, previous to that, I was five years on the London and North-Western in a similar capacity.

2111. *Mr. Bunny.*] Mr. Stone, is the traffic increasing or decreasing on the Hutt line?—At present the passenger traffic is about stationery, neither increasing nor decreasing. The goods traffic is increasing.

2112. Is the goods traffic increasing between Wellington and the Lower Hutt?—No.

2113. Is it decreasing?—I think it is much about the same.

2114. Are you aware that the storekeepers at the Lower Hutt used to use the railway?—I am not aware of it.

2115. Are they using the railway now?—Not to any great extent.

2116. Do you know any reason why they do not use it?—I have never heard any reason.

2117. Have you ever thought it your duty to ask them why they have ceased to use the railway?—I have never been to the parties. I make inquiries of the station clerks.

2118. And what is the answer?—That they hear no complaints, and know no reason why they do not use the railway.

2119. You do not think it your business to make direct inquiries?—Not direct to the storekeepers.

2120. How often do you travel up the line?—Once or twice a week.

2121. Have you ever travelled by the late train?—Never.

2122. Has it been reported to you that the lights at the station at the Lower Hutt were all out when the night train arrived there?—I believe in one case it was reported to me.

2123. Can you give me the date of that?—It might be six weeks or two months ago, I think.

2124. Was anything done?—The porter was absent and overslept himself. That was the only case I heard of. That was the explanation I got.

2125. Have you ever heard of any case of a train arriving, and no one to look after the points?—On that occasion.

2126. No previous occasion?—No.

2127. Is it not a serious thing?—I reprimanded the porter. He said it was the first time it had occurred. The porter went home and had fallen asleep.

2128. Do you think that, by any alteration in the tariff, a great deal of traffic which now goes on the road might be brought on the railway?—As far as I have been able to think it out, I do not think there would be a material difference. I have put it down to the system of cartage they have.

2129. You do not think it part of your duty to ascertain from persons whose traffic would be considerable on the line, and who do not use the lines, what their reason is for not using the line?—If I met with those people I would ask them.

2130. You do not think it part of your business as Manager to go direct to them?—Not to go direct in every case.

2131. *Hon. Mr. Richardson.*] Had you any experience at all in the management of the traffic part of the business before you came here?—Not direct; only from observation.

2132. The accounts of both those lines you have been on are rendered weekly?—Yes.

2133. Are you in a position to say whether, if there was a change made to render these accounts monthly, it would be any saving?—As far as I can judge at present there would not be any advantage in it, with our present traffic.

2134. *Mr. Larnach.*] Do you think it possible to increase the traffic of the Hutt line by running early and late trains daily, suitable for mechanics and workmen to travel by?—I do not think it would pay working expenses.

2135. What are your reasons for thinking so?—From observations at Home.

2136. What has Home to do with this?—My idea is that workmen do not care to live in the country. The North British Railway works were some two miles out of Glasgow. The company built houses and let them at low rents, and other houses were built, still the workmen would not live in them. They said "We must have trains," and they had to start from Glasgow before 5 in the morning, and did not get back till after 7 at night.