

Mr. Stone.

25th Sept., 1877.

2137. What distance would they have to travel?—Two miles each way.

2138. Are you aware that on the Port Chalmers line several townships have grown up since the early and late trains were commenced?—At Home the young single men said it was too dull to live in the country. Men with families could get employment for their sons and daughters in the towns.

2139. Cheaper rents might induce them to live along the line?—Yes.

2140. It might be an inducement to run at cheaper fares?—It comes to a question how much a man could save in rent by living in the country, and whether his travelling expenses would come to the same amount.

2141. Is it not better to carry passengers at lower rates and have full trains, than to carry them empty. Take your present trains: According to the present hours they run, if fares on Saturdays or days that people could get away from town were lowered, more people would like to travel?—We have a low rate for Saturdays and Sundays, and are carrying more people, but we are not deriving much profit from it; but that will be altered as the weather gets finer.

2142. Do you not think it would be advisable to start early and late trains?—Yes; but you cannot stop them, if people build houses on the faith that trains will run.

2143. Did you, in all your experience, never know railways to increase in traffic and settlement in the direction they run?—Yes, in some districts. It does not apply in all.

2144. Do you not think that, from the few outlets in Wellington, the Hutt Railway is particularly favourable in that respect, and that the running of early and late trains would tend to increase settlement in that direction?—There is no doubt settlement will go on in that direction, because there is no other outlet for it.

2145. You think it would be worth trying?—I scarcely think that. So far as I have been able to judge, the middle-class people are the greatest travellers.

2146. Do you think you run sufficient trains now?—Taken altogether, we run about as many trains as are required for the present traffic.

2147. You have never tried to run more, so you do not know?—We are running three late trains, and they do not pay every night.

2148. It would not pay persons to live at the Hutt, if they could only get out three nights a week. If they could get home every night, they might be induced to live there. Do you not think that possible?—If you would make that remark refer more to the middle class, storekeepers and professional gentlemen, there would be no objection to running trains at hours suitable for them, but not for the workmen as a class.

2149. We will take the public generally—clerks, &c.?—It becomes then a question of what hours would be most suitable for clerks and that class of people.

2150. Do you think that an extra train on Sunday would increase the traffic. The trains run at most inconvenient times here. Do you not think if more frequent trains were run on Sunday the traffic would be increased?—It is possible, when we get finer weather.

2151. Mr. Bunny.] Do you keep a book in which you enter a report when you make your periodical visits up the line, and anything that strikes you?—No; I have not been in the habit of making that report.

2152. Have you nothing to show the days upon which you pay these visits?—No.

2153. Have you nothing in your books which would show this case of want of lights?—I have the report from the driver and guard, and the porter's explanation.

2154. The Acting-Chairman.] From the returns before me, it appears that the expenses of the Wellington-Masterton line exhaust all but about 14 per cent. of the gross earnings of this line?—Yes.

2155. Is that a reasonable state of affairs?—The expenditure is high, compared with the receipts.

2156. Is it exceedingly high?—Yes, I should say so.

2157. Does that allow for depreciation?—No.

2158. Wear and tear of rolling-stock?—No.

2159. Is it a fact that, if due allowance were made for depreciation, there would be a deficiency?—A very small deficiency.

2160. From day to day?—Yes.

2161. Referring to the classified statement at page 39, there has been a great increase relatively of earnings during the past six months?—Yes.

2162. Can you account for that?—There is one thing—the whole of the rolling-stock is getting older, and requires more repairs, and the same with the permanent way.

2163. Do you mean to say the repairs are included in that?—Yes.

2164. And that accounts for the high charge?—Yes, partly; and then there is the increase in the pay to employes, there being a larger number.

2165. Do you see any possibility of an improvement in the traffic—in the receipts?—Yes.

2166. Whence do you expect that?—I mentioned that the passenger traffic was about stationary, but I anticipate an increase as the weather gets finer. There is an actual increase in the revenue from goods traffic.

2167. Do you anticipate that within the next two or three years there will be such an increase as will bring the thing to reasonable profit?—Yes.

2168. That would entail further depreciation?—Not to any great extent.

2169. Do you see any means of improving the traffic?—I do not see anything that would make any great alteration. They have at present a minimum rate for passengers, which is two miles. I think that might be reduced to one mile. That minimum has slightly affected the traffic to Kaiwarawara, which is a little over a mile and a quarter, and is charged as two miles.

2170. Do you think third-class trains would increase the net returns?—I do not think they would, because they have the low fares now on the Saturdays, and it is perhaps the most convenient day for the poorer class to travel.

2171. Of what does your goods traffic chiefly consist?—Firewood, sawn timber, posts and rails, and sand and gravel.