

*Hon. Mr. Richardson* : I object to a statement like that going forth. At the time the return was asked for no Committee had been appointed by the House ; and, if I remember right, the question was similar to one now on the Order Paper for the passenger-traffic from station to station on all the railways.

152. *Mr. Maxwell.*] Now, for passengers travelling distances not exceeding three miles, there were about two hundred thousand out of a total of about two millions—roughly speaking, 10 per cent. who travelled not exceeding that distance ; and the least fare is 3d.—that is the cost of each journey, the return-ticket costing 6d. Your minimum fare for a journey is 4d. Would not the introduction of your system be prejudicial to this percentage of passengers ?—No, I do not believe it would, because you are taking the return-fare and I am speaking of single tickets.

153. But return-tickets are merely two tickets issued for the convenience of the passenger. Why do you object to consider the return-ticket ?—I do not object ; I simply say that I consider return-tickets not advisable, and that my calculations are based on the single fares. If it is thought desirable to use return-tickets they can be applied to my plan as well as to the present. You are pitting your return-fares against my single, to which I do object.

154. But you have based your calculation of what the traffic will be on what it is now, and more than half the traffic is in return-passengers ; and you have got your average fare by dividing the total sum received by the total number of passengers, and the return-ticket counts as two passengers : surely you cannot hold that I am not entitled to compare our return-fare with your single fare if you have done that ?—Yes, I am entitled to object. You say that half the return-journey costs 3d. ; and I have drawn no comparisons between return-fares and season-ticket fares—I have stuck to the single fares throughout.

155. *Hon. Major Atkinson.*] As I understand it, the point Mr. Maxwell raises is, that persons at present paying 3d. will be at a disadvantage when they have to pay 4d. if you decide not to issue any return-tickets ?—Yes ; but what I rely on is that, instead of issuing return-tickets, the fourpenny fare is sufficient inducement to get people to go on to other stations—or, rather, the opportunity of going on to other stations will be sufficient inducement to sell the fourpenny tickets.

156. But, supposing your plan is brought into operation, this 10 per cent. would clearly be at a disadvantage ?—Yes, I admit that.

157. *Mr. Maxwell.*] Then, for distances not exceeding three miles there would be a disadvantage ; and if you take the second stage—five miles—our lowest fare for that distance is 5d., as against your 4d.—there is only a slight advantage there ?—A penny is a very considerable advantage.

158. What I contend is, that up to five miles there is no particular advantage gained, and you have got to leave out all these passengers—about four hundred thousand—in considering what increase you are going to get ?—I say there is a very great advantage.

159. And up to five miles you think you would gain largely ?—Yes, certainly.

160. Coming on, then, to distances from five to ten miles—I have taken ten miles, because the chief suburban traffic lies within that distance. Now, it is this suburban traffic that forms a very large proportion of our traffic. There are about 763,000 passengers out of about two millions travelling between five and ten miles ; and I want to point out this important feature : that the number travelling between five and ten miles is nearly double the number travelling up to five miles, notwithstanding that the fares are considerably more. I say that arises from the circumstances under which people are led to travel ; it is not affected so much by the rate as the conditions—that is to say, people have to travel to places such as Port Chalmers, Mosgiel, or Lyttelton. These are within the ten-miles distance ; and people travel there quite independently of the fare ?—This is very important indeed. Nothing that Mr. Maxwell has said has gratified me so much. He has given most convincing proof that there must be a very extraordinary financial result from my proposals. He says that 763,000 people travel the distance from five to ten miles. Now, you see how he establishes my average : you cross the seven-mile stage—you must get my average fare.

161. But you said you were going to include Port Chalmers, Lyttelton, and other places in the first stage ?—Yes ; but I will still get the average.

162. Do you think you will get a very large increase between five and ten miles ?—Most assuredly.

163. Then, coming to distances beyond ten miles. From 1,162,000 people who travel within ten miles we get £47,000 ; while on the proportion carried for over ten miles—763,000—we get £177,000. Do you think that under these circumstances your average fare can be made to reach a shilling ?—Certainly I do.

164. Our long-distance fares range from twice or three times your fares up to twenty times at the longer distances ?—When Mr. Richardson asked me about this yesterday, I stated that I feel quite confident of getting three fares from every station where there is now one. If I get that, and the average fare only reaches 8d., I must get the same amount as we do now, and all the rest of the travelling is to the good.

165. You see, 763,000 passengers average now about 4s. 6d. : it seems to me that, with the difference there is between the present fares and yours, you would require perhaps eight or nine times as many passengers over the ten-mile distance than we have now to get the same revenue ?—I distinctly refuse to deal with any particular section ; I base my calculations wholly on the general average. To get the same amount of revenue as you do now all you want is two fares at 1s., three fares at 8d., or four at 6d. ; and it does not matter how or where you get them.

166. Perhaps not ; but I believe averages are most fallacious, and that the only way we can get at correct results is by examining these points in detail, and getting out the facts. Do I understand you to object to answer the questions in detail ?—I refuse to pin my results on any of these details. That is where we are always making the error : we try to make each individual mile and section pay ; and we shall never do it. Under the present system you are compelled to live on the average, and why not submit to it at once.