

If, as he has said he expects to do, Mr. Vaile gets four times the traffic under 10 miles, and gets 4,000,000 passengers, at an average fare of $4\frac{1}{2}$ d., in order to get the average 1s. which he anticipates, there must be a large increase over 10 miles; but we are in difficulty in arriving at an average fare for the journeys beyond 10 miles. 27

Suppose it to be 1s. $1\frac{1}{2}$ d.: Then, with 4,000,000 at $4\frac{1}{2}$ d., we require 20,000,000 at 1s. $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. to give an average fare of 1s. for the 24,000,000 we carry. The question is, should we get so high an average as 1s. $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. for distances over 10 miles? If we take the average of 3 second to 1 first-class passenger, 1s. $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. would be the average fare for passengers for three stages from a capital, but many will only travel over the first and second stages; and in the country districts the average fare for 50 miles is only $4\frac{1}{2}$ d., so that it is most unlikely that so high an average as 1s. $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. could be reached, and it seems scarcely probable in practice that such an average on the whole as 1s. could be attained with such fares as are proposed. 28

If we tried 4,000,000 at $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. and 4,000,000 at 1s. $7\frac{1}{2}$ d., we should then get an average of 1s. for the 8,000,000; but when we consider that all first-class passengers must pass over three stages to give a fare of 1s. 6d., and all second-class must pass over five stages to give a fare of 1s. 8d., it seems more than improbable that such an average beyond the 10-mile distances could be possibly attained. 29

However, any such calculations we make upon so problematical a question as to what traffic we should get are most speculative. They, however, seem to lead to the inference that the 1s. average would be unattainable in practice. 29A

Under any circumstances we have no experience which will lead us to suppose that any traffic which may be got at such fares for such distance would pay the working expenses of carrying it on under the conditions prevailing in the colony at present. 30

There does not seem to be any special advantage to be gained by adopting stages; whatever can be done in rating by stages can be done just as conveniently with the mileage-unit. 31

The main point in Mr. Vaile's scheme is reduction of fares and rates; he suggests the former, but he now makes no precise suggestion about rates, although he has formerly done so in papers before the Committee. 32

If the question of reducing rates and fares is taken alone, it seems susceptible of being dealt with more easily under the present system of rating than under Mr. Vaile's scheme of stages. 33

The suggestion offered during evidence that the railways should be a non-paying department seems bad, as such a practice would conduce to extravagance. The operations in working the railways are so varied and so extensive that there are great opportunities for extravagance. The demands of the public are constant and persistent for accommodation and improvement, and always involve more expenditure. A great incentive to officers of every grade now is to be economical, to try to show the best results in working their departments; if it is once laid down that paying is no object, and that good financial results in working are not to be looked for, that incentive to economy will be removed, and extravagance is sure to follow. 34

The use of stamps is advocated in place of tickets by Mr. Vaile. It has probably been suggested by thousands before him, but no one, so far as I have heard, has been able to propound a plan by which a reasonable and workable check against extensive fraud can be maintained. If Mr. Vaile can propound such a scheme it will be well that he should do so, as, if it could be safely carried out, the stamp-system might prove a useful institution. It is not sufficient to merely suggest that stamps may be used. 35

The proposal to relieve the Government from risk as carriers from the results of the negligence of their servants does not seem to commend itself. 36

Mr. Vaile thinks that by his charging on stages he secures equality of treatment. Equality of treatment is not secured unless the element of cost of the service is included in the transaction. The only equality in Mr. Vaile's scheme is on paper, and consists in the fact of his marking off equal distances on paper, which, moreover, he does not propose to adhere to in practice closely. The seven-miles traffic from Wellington to Petone is not done under the same conditions as that from Christchurch to Lyttelton, or Dunedin to Mosgiel. The 50 miles including the Rimutaka incline involves totally different conditions to a 50-miles stage on the Canterbury Plains. There can be no equality of treatment in charging the same prices under conditions so different. 37

I have added some examples of rates and fares on railways in other parts of the world. Comparisons cannot be justly drawn unless the conditions of working in each case are known. The element of the cost of labour governs the expense of working, and must be the first consideration in drawing comparisons. 38

Some remarks have been made about increasing the speed of suburban trains. With the examples of metropolitan fares is shown the time occupied by the train in the eight-mile run. It is forty-four minutes, with the very finest locomotives in the world and the most complete and powerful brakes. It is as well to understand that with the growth of suburban traffic suburban trains will tend rather to become slower than faster; and that persons who look for high speed with frequent stoppages are looking for what is unreasonable and unattainable in practice. 39