

192. Do you think that the rates in operation now are prohibitive—that they have the tendency to stop the trade of the country—in your district?—No, I am sure they do not.
193. You have been a long time in Dunedin?—Twelve years.
194. And you had been in the provincial service as first District Traffic Manager?—Yes.
195. Were the rates higher or lower at that time?—Very much higher.
196. And the rates have been gradually lowered over a series of years until now?—Yes. When the provinces were abolished we assimilated our rates with the Canterbury rates, which were very much lower than ours.
197. Have you many complaints from customers of the railways that the rates are prohibitory to carrying on the trade of the district?—No.
198. Do you think that there is any material proportion of the goods-traffic thrown off the lines of your district—that is to say, from Oamaru to Stirling—by the present rates?—No; I am quite sure there is none.
199. Have you had many complaints during the whole of your career of the complication of our scale of charges?—I have heard complaints, but not many.
200. How many?—I seldom hear any now: people soon get accustomed to the scales.
201. The scales are very simple as compared with those in operation in England?—Yes, much more simple.
202. You know the Waimea Plains Railway; and that they fix their own rates on that line?—Yes.
203. Are their rates higher or lower than ours?—Considerably higher—in some instances more than twice as high.
204. *Mr. Hatch.*] Do many of the trains in your district come in empty, or are there comparatively few?—The traffic is very fluctuating: I have known that one day a train would be quite crowded, and the passengers complaining, and the next day the same train would be comparatively empty.
205. The fact of the trains running empty would chiefly exist after holiday-times, I presume—after there has been some time of excursion-rates?—There is no doubt that affects the traffic.
206. *Mr. Maxwell.*] Is it not the case, as a rule, trains which run one way full run the other way empty—with the suburban trains, for instance?—Yes. Our morning suburban trains generally run out empty and return full, and evening-trains *vice versa*.
207. Is there likely to be any change in that respect if the traffic were doubled?—No, I do not think so.
208. I do not know whether you have found that rule to be universal in England?—Yes, I have.
209. *Mr. Hatch.*] Has the goods-traffic between Dunedin and Invercargill very materially increased since the reduction made six or eight months ago?—It has not increased very much, but it has been maintained. If the reduction had not been made we should have lost some of it.
210. Do we get any more money now than before?—About the same.
211. And you are doing the service for about half the price?—Not so low as that.
- Mr. Maxwell:* I think I can answer that. We are getting a little more goods, and a little less money; but we should have lost if we had not reduced the rates.
212. *Mr. Gore.*] On Saturdays you give return-tickets at single rates?—Yes—at the single rates originally charged.
213. Do you find that there is more traffic on Saturdays?—Yes.
214. Do not you think that if the rates were lowered there would be more traffic?—Yes, we might have.
215. Do you think that these people who travel at the low rates on Saturday would also travel on Tuesdays or Wednesdays if the rates were low on those days?—No, I do not think so.
216. *Mr. Walker.*] You have other market-days than Saturday: do not you find the traffic increase very much on those days?—It has; but the Saturday traffic is not nearly so great as it was, in consequence.
217. I allude to the country market-days. Do you not find that the traffic has much increased on those days in the districts affected?—Yes.
218. It is my experience in Canterbury that these cheap fares have increased the local traffic generally. Is that the case round Dunedin?—Yes, I believe it is.
219. *Mr. Gore.*] I understood you to say that lowering the rates increased the amount of goods carried?—I do not think that is the case generally. The question was asked me specially about Dunedin and Invercargill traffic, where there is competition by sea.
220. It has increased the traffic there?—I do not say that it has increased the traffic; but to have kept to the old rates would have partially stopped the traffic between these points.
221. Supposing your rates were still lowered, do you think that it would have a tendency to increase the amount of goods carried?—No, I do not think so.
222. In other words, you think there are so many hundreds of tons of goods to carry between these points, and you cannot increase that quantity?—I think we carried all the inland goods—namely, merchandise traffic.
223. Did you carry all the wool to the ports by rail?—Yes, we carried every bale of wool in Otago by rail.
224. *Mr. Hatch.*] Did the competition by road in the southern district answer, or did it fail?—I cannot say anything about that.
225. *Mr. O'Connor.*] With regard to passengers: what is the maximum number you can reach on a holiday?—We have carried as many as ten thousand in three days from Dunedin.
226. That is an average of about three thousand three hundred: did you exceed that on your Port Chalmers excursion in one day?—Yes.