

381. It has been stated by Mr. Vaile that, if he got two fares at 1s. for every one we get now, he would get as much money: do you think he would get as much net revenue?—I may as well give you some figures which I got out lately. For twenty-four weeks ending the 31st March, 1886, we carried 34,000 passengers from Auckland, not including season-ticket journeys to stations within an eight-mile radius, for which we got £1,080; and from Auckland to Waikato stations—that is, Huntly and beyond—we carried 3,287 passengers, and earned £2,401. Consequently we carried less than a tenth of the number of passengers to the longer distances stated, and earned considerably over twice the amount of money as compared with the short-distance traffic.

382. But, assuming that we doubled our passengers at the shilling fare, should we get the same net revenue?—If we doubled our passengers we might have to double train-services.

383. Then we should not get the same amount of net revenue?—No.

384. In fact, you might get less?—I could not say. I am quite sure we should have to double our morning and evening service. I may say, from my experience on railways, that the suburban traffic is by no means the best-paying traffic. If you take the Metropolitan Railway, it is by no means a financial success, and it carries a hundred and ten millions a year.

385. Then, suppose, instead of two fares at 1s., we get four at 6d., should we not be very much worse off then?—Yes: there is no doubt that the bigger the traffic, if you are going to earn the same money, the less would be the net revenue.

386. Have you had many individual complaints brought to you during the last year about the goods-rates?—No, very few. Of course, I have seen a great many complaints in the papers.

387. But have many reached you personally?—No. I may say generally that the people who do most business with us are those who complain least.

388. Who do the complaints in the newspapers come from?—I could not say.

389. They are generally anonymous?—Yes.

390. Do you know that goods are brought in large quantities from the South to Auckland?—Yes—potatoes and grain.

391. Are not large quantities of new potatoes sent away from Auckland by sea?—Yes—to Australia.

392. Are they not sent down to Wellington and Christchurch?—I am not aware of that.

*The Chairman:* They are sent not only to Wellington, but also to Dunedin.

393. *Mr. Maxwell.*] Do you know what rates are paid for the conveyance of produce from the South?—I am given to understand that the sea-freight is about 15s. a ton.

394. There are large quantities coming from Lyttelton and Oamaru, and those from Lyttelton would have to pay railway-rates first?—They would have to pay about 4s. a ton.

395. Is it a fact that you have sent large quantities of oats to the Waikato which came from the South?—Yes; we send oats to the coach-proprietors at Cambridge and other places.

396. Do they not grow oats at all in the Waikato now?—I do not think they grow much in the way of oats.

397. Do you not send flour to the Waikato also?—Yes. There is a flour-mill in the Waikato, but still, some goes from Auckland.

398. Is wheat ever sent from Auckland to these mills in the Waikato?—No, except to a very limited extent. We send grain up country, but I believe it is principally seed-wheat.

399. Do you think the railway-rates prohibit the carriage of grain to Auckland from the country?—I cannot see how that could be in consequence of these shipping-rates, because grain coming into Auckland by sea is much more handicapped by freight than grain from the Waikato. I do not know any means of getting grain to Auckland cheaper than from the Waikato.

400. Are there not large quantities of cattle brought to Auckland by sea?—Yes; the trade between Auckland and the Waitara is a very large one.

401. What is the cost per head?—About 17s.

402. And what is the cost from the Waikato?—Six shillings would be about the average charge.

403. Are any cattle driven in from the Waikato?—They have done so twice within the last two years, but then feed was sent by the railway for them.

404. Then the rates are not prohibitive as far as cattle are concerned?—No: they can be brought ninety-four miles for one-third of the rate from Waitara.

405. Are sheep also brought from the Waikato?—Yes.

406. Are they all Waikato sheep?—Yes, so far as we know.

407. Are not large mobs of sheep driven from Gisborne and Napier, and sent down by rail to Auckland?—Yes.

408. Sheep are brought from the southern part of the Island for the supply of the Auckland market, and for freezing—that is to say, from the West Coast by sea, and from Gisborne and Napier they are driven overland, and then sent on by rail?—Yes; that is so.

409. You have been in some manufacturing districts in England?—Yes: I have been in the Wolverhampton district, and also in the Worcester and Lancashire districts.

410. Have not great communities sprung up in those districts immediately surrounding the places where iron and coal were raised for manufacture?—Yes, undoubtedly.

411. *Mr. Whyte.*] I should like very much if you could give us some opinion of the stage-system as applied to goods?—I will give you this opinion: that if you are going to convey goods over a fifty-mile stage for the same price as over a seven-mile stage, either it will not pay, or you are charging a great deal too much for the seven-mile stage.

412. *Mr. Maxwell.*] Have you got any idea what the demands for the reductions of rates are for?—I have an extract from the *New Zealand Herald* of the 9th June, 1886, which touches on that point. It proposes a reduction of 10s. per ton on agricultural produce and chaff brought from the Waikato to Auckland. The present rates from Te Awamutu are—for agricultural produce generally, 13s. 4d. a ton; and for chaff, hay, and straw, 12s. 7d. a ton. If the reduction were granted, it