

*Hon. Mr. Richardson* : On all passenger-fares terminal charges are taken into consideration ; and something or other, whatever it may be, is bound to be added.

480. *Mr. Whyte* : Talking of long-distance fares, take to Rotorua, 180 miles : the fare under Mr. Vaile's scheme would be 2s. 4d. second-class ; do you not think that difference would bring about a very large increase of traffic ?—No, I do not think it would, on account of the time occupied.

481. *Mr. Vaile*.] Your opinion, then, amounts to this : that no reduction of fares or freights will bring an increase of railway-trade ?—No, that is not my opinion. I should like to say that, so far from stating such a thing as that, I object to the question even being put to me ; because, as a business-man, I could not say such a thing.

482. Then, you do admit that from my proposed fares there would be a considerable increase of trade ?—No : I must consider them in detail before I give an opinion.

483. The reductions are all very large : if one brings in trade will not all ?—It depends upon whether there is likely to be a large business or not.

484. Do you mean to say that a large reduction of passenger-fares will not bring an increase of ordinary business ?—It depends entirely upon where you make your reduction.

485. Say the reduction was from Auckland to Pukekohe ?—I think you would have an increase there.

486. How much, do you think ?—I should have to test it to be able to say.

487. Cannot you form an opinion ?—No ; but I think there would be an increase. People could go there and back in a day. I believe time is a greater element than cost in this question.

488. You agree with me that my chief increase would probably be between the ten- and thirty-mile stage ?—Well, at present there is a very large traffic from Otahuhu : I do not believe you would get any increase there at all, as your fares are not materially lower than ours as from Auckland. Then, to come to Papatoitoi, I am not aware that there is any population to speak of living there : I do not think you would get much difference there. I believe you would get a large increase from Papakura and Drury.

489. *Mr. Whyte*.] Do you not think that there would be an increase as far as people could come and go in one day ?—Yes.

490. Do you think it would lead to an increase to Hamilton ?—People would only have a very short time there : I do not think there would be any material increase to Hamilton.

*Mr. Hatch* (to Mr. Vaile) : Do you propose that on new lines passengers should travel at the same rates which you would charge, say, from Pukekohe to Hamilton—fifty-four miles, for 6d. ?

*Mr. Vaile* : If it was a Government line I certainly would.

*Mr. Hatch* : Take from Christchurch to the West Coast. What would be the fare there ?

*Mr. Vaile* : I could not possibly say that without further information.

*Mr. Hatch* : There are two stages to Rolleston, and would probably be another small stage beyond ; then there would be three big stages—3s. altogether—do you think you could possibly run for that money ?

*Mr. Vaile* : Those are not my fares. I could not reckon it without further information.

*Hon. Mr. Richardson* : Mr. Vaile has two stations to Rolleston, and there is no town of any consequence after that ; and there is no settlement whatever beyond that till you get right over to the West Coast, nor is there likely to be. The distance from Springfield to Brunnerton is ninety-five miles—that is, two stages. I want to know how many stages Mr. Vaile would have from Christchurch to the West Coast ?

*Mr. Vaile* : The first question I am asked is how many stages am I to make over this line ? I cannot tell, for want of information. The next question is, Would it pay ? I can only say this : that I have never calculated on making any particular line pay. We live now on the general average, and we cannot possibly get away from that fact, and whether this line would pay in connection with the others depends upon the quantity of these political or useless railways you make.

*Hon. Mr. Richardson* : Political or otherwise, are we to understand that if that line were made to-morrow by the Government, you would treat it in the same way as other lines ?

*Mr. Vaile* : Yes, I would. But I have no hesitation in saying that neither on your system nor mine can that line be made to pay.

*Hon. Mr. Richardson* : Mr. Vaile declines to pledge his system to one particular line. If you apply it at all you must apply it to the whole railways of the colony.

*Mr. Vaile* : Yes, that is so. I have always considered the railways as a whole. Some of the railways pay fairly well now ; others do not pay a copper : we have to take the whole thing now and live on the average, while we profess not to do so. Now, I say, let us accept the position at once, and say we will be content with the general average, and work for it. If we do that we shall make a success of our railways commercially, financially, and socially.

*Hon. Mr. Richardson* : Supposing that this Committee were to recommend that this system be tried, and that Parliament should determine that the system should be tried on the Auckland lines—which are a separate system, and do not interfere with the other lines of the colony—would Mr. Vaile be satisfied with that as a fair trial of his system ?

*Mr. Vaile* : Before I could reply positively “Yes” or “No” to that question I should certainly like to be furnished with more information ; but, from the information I have, I believe it would be a fair trial. I could not speak positively without further information.

*Hon. Mr. Richardson* : What further information would you want ?

*Mr. Vaile* : I should want to know what is the average fare paid on the Auckland lines. That would be the basis of my calculations.

*Mr. Walker* : There is another point. I think you told us that 11 per cent. of the population of the colony were outside the benefits of the railways : you would want to know if this was the same with regard to the Auckland district ?

*Mr. Vaile* : That might influence the calculation ; but, so far as I know, I believe the Auckland section would give a fair trial to the system.