

531. There is another matter—such charges as these proposed for goods on the long stages—fifty miles. I think you will agree with me that these charges would not even pay for the maintenance of the truck. The traffic and locomotive charges and expenses of general management would be entirely left out?—Yes; that is the case.

532. When you mentioned the reduction of fares between Edinburgh and Glasgow you did not lay any stress on the cause of the reduction. Was it not competition alone?—Yes; it was a disagreement between the companies, and very nearly ruined one company.

533. You have had a great many years' railway experience?—Yes, I have had twenty-two years' altogether.

534. How many years in the Old Country?—Twelve years.

535. Have you been in the vicinity of many large cities?—Yes; I have lived in Glasgow, which is the second city in the Empire, for years, and know the whole business about there.

536. Do you think there is a very material difference between suburban and long-distance traffic?—Yes, a very great difference. Suburban traffic is largely composed of people who come in to their business in the morning and return in the evening; and other portions of the suburban traffic come from the families settled in the suburbs, who do a certain amount of daily travelling. Long-distance traffic is quite different, and is spasmodic in its operation: in a farming district, for instance, people must stay at home at certain seasons, and at others, perhaps, cannot afford to travel.

537. How many years have you been in New Zealand?—Ten years.

538. You have been in charge of the traffic at Christchurch, Oamaru, Dunedin, and have resided in Wellington; and you have a thorough knowledge of every line in the colony, and of the traffic on the lines?—Yes.

539. Mr. Vaile has said, in some of his writings, that the number of journeys a passenger will make is chiefly limited by the speed, comfort, and cheapness with which you can convey him. Does it not seem to you that there is something more wanted than that?—Yes, I think there are a great many other considerations: there is the question of population, and also the question of class of population, and also the question of leisure-time.

540. You have had a large Home experience, and you know something about the practice in other countries: do you know any simpler plan of charging rates and fares than we have here?—No, none. Of course I know the English rates thoroughly, having had to do with them so many years. I also know the Australian, Indian, and American rates; and, generally, I have kept myself posted up in new railway regulations, and I am not aware of any simpler method of charging than our own. Ours are not nearly so extensive or complicated as the English.

541. Is not the English system made more extensive by more varied traffic?—Yes, that is so; and when I commenced in New Zealand our tariff was a very simple one—very nearly as simple as Mr. Vaile's—but additions were forced upon us from time to time. The demands of the public, and different kinds of traffic springing up, necessitated the making of regulations to guide our staff.

542. You have seen the whole of our present regulations built up?—Yes.

543. Do you know of any single regulation or rate which has not arisen out of some demand?—None. I also know that from time to time we have refrained unless the regulation was actually forced upon us.

544. *Hon. Major Atkinson.*] Then we are very near perfection?—No, I do not say so at all: we always have to be altering.

545. *Mr. Maxwell.*] If we were asked our own opinion, we should say that these rates and regulations might be considerably improved, that we have to consider what the Government is prepared to do, and what the public will expect; and that is what binds us more than anything else?—Yes, that is the case.

*Mr. Whyte:* I should like to ask Mr. Vaile about the freight on goods. I think he said in some of his addresses that he did not expect to reduce the freight on goods very much by means of his scheme of stages, but that he expected to derive such a large revenue from the passenger-traffic that he would be enabled to reduce the goods-freights?

*Mr. Vaile:* What I say with reference to goods is that you cannot have products without producers; and if you give the producers facilities they will take advantage of them, and you will make a profit; I would apply that profit to the reduction of goods-freights. I maintain that you can make such a profit as to enable you to reduce the goods-freights one-third all round. I would apply the great bulk to the reduction of freights on our natural products.

*Mr. Whyte:* Then you build your hopes of reducing goods-freights on the financial success of your passenger-scheme?

*Mr. Vaile:* Yes, because, as I have said repeatedly, the whole thing hangs on the passengers. You cannot get freight if you do not get people.

*Mr. Whyte:* In that case, the whole question comes back to the financial prospects of the passenger-scheme.

*Hon. Mr. Richardson:* I cannot get from Mr. Vaile a clear statement of his goods-charges. I would ask him what would be the charge for merchandise between Auckland and Te Awamutu?

*Mr. Vaile:* Merchandise would be charged 2s. 6d. per ton, and it is six stages: it would be 15s. per ton. That is the principle on which I would reckon the charge; but I have never had sufficient information on which to found either a proper charge or a proper classification. If with my present knowledge I were proposing a scale of charges, I should probably make it different from what is down here; but I have always adhered to my first figures to avoid confusion.

546. *Mr. Whyte (to Mr. Hannay).*] Is not 15s. a ton very much in excess of the present charges?—No, I do not think so.

547. *Mr. Vaile.*] I think, Mr. Hannay, that since this tariff has been put down our tariff has been altered about six times—since March, 1883?—There have been several alterations.