

No. 4.

The RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS to the RAILWAY REFORM LEAGUE, Auckland.

SIR,—

Wellington, 7th November, 1889.

I have the honour, by direction of the Commissioners, to acknowledge your reply of the 31st October, to the effect—(1) That the Railway Reform League is not now prepared to furnish details of the proposed scheme either for goods-traffic or passenger-traffic; (2) that the League would give every necessary information about the goods-traffic scheme after a trial of the proposed new system on passenger-traffic had proved successful.

The Commissioners find, on reference to the parliamentary report to which you direct their attention, that it was considered that it would take two or three years at least to give Mr. Vaile's system a fair trial; the whole subject of the goods-traffic may for the present, therefore, be considered to be indefinitely postponed.

The Commissioners are in some doubt as to what system the League is advocating for passengers. In your letter you speak of the Hungarian Government having adopted the system "proposed by this League, &c.," while, at the same time you refer the Commissioners to Mr. Vaile's system, and the report of the Committee thereon, for details. The Commissioners have been favoured with a copy of a letter of Mr. Vaile's, appearing in the *Herald* of the 15th August last, in which he says these are different systems. He mentions—“(2.) The system of equal zones or stages proposed by Adolph Engel, and now about to be tried for the first time by the Hungarians: (3.) The system of unequal zones, based on average cost and population, proposed by myself in this city in 1882.”

The Commissioners have carefully studied the evidence given before the Parliamentary Committee on Mr. Vaile's system, and have also perused among other papers the article on the Hungarian system, kindly forwarded by the Secretary of the League. They perceive very enormous differences in the systems, which appear to be elaborated on different bases, as Mr. Vaile has pointed out. Judging from the evident confusion on the subject on the part of the League, the Railway Commissioners still think that it is necessary that they should be furnished with the details of your scheme before expressing an opinion on its suitability.

I have, &c.,

E. G. PILCHER, Secretary.

No. 5.

The RAILWAY REFORM LEAGUE, Auckland, to the RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS.

GENTLEMEN,—

Auckland, 30th November, 1889.

I have the honour, by direction of the Railway Reform League, to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th November, 1889.

Referring to the remark contained in the first part of your letter, that our previous letter of the 31st October contained, in effect, a statement that the League is not now prepared to furnish details of the proposed scheme either for goods or passenger traffic, I beg to repeat what has been before stated—namely, that the printed evidence given before the Parliamentary Committee, to which the Commissioners have already been referred, contains the general features and sufficient details to enable the Commissioners to give the proposed scheme a trial. I regret that the Commissioners seem unable or are unwilling to realise this fact. The League cannot understand why the Commissioners should have any doubt (as they say they have) respecting what system the League is advocating. There is no confusion on the subject on the part of the League, as suggested in your letter. The League is quite clear as to what its members require, and is satisfied that the Commissioners are sufficiently acquainted with the general bearing and details of the proposed scheme to give it a fair trial if they so wished. The League regrets to say that it is forced to the conclusion that the Commissioners are placing unnecessary difficulties in the way of the League, and are pursuing this line of action against the wishes of a very large section of the colonists of New Zealand.

Mr. Conyers, the late Commissioner of Railways for the South Island, gave very clear and distinct evidence before the Committee referred to that there was no difficulty whatever in applying the proposed system to the New Zealand railways, and that it would only take him two months to apply it to the passenger-traffic on the Hurunui-Bluff line. Mr. Conyers's ability as a railway manager has never been questioned; and we are justified in assuming that what is sufficient for his guidance should be sufficient for yours.

With regard to the goods traffic, as in making a complete alteration in the system of administering our railways we must commence somewhere, the League considers it advisable to begin with passenger traffic. You should be aware that this is the portion of the traffic that can most readily be made to yield a profit; and the amount of profit so obtained would, to a large extent, determine the amount of reduction that can be made in goods rates.

The League attaches the utmost importance to goods traffic, and for that reason considers it would be most unwise to attempt to fix the rates before the profit obtainable from passenger traffic has been, at any rate, approximately ascertained. The League would direct your attention to the fact that it would be impossible for any man or body of men to lay down a goods tariff on a specific basis—one which would be suitable to the requirements of the colony, and be at the same time both eligible and equitable—without ready access to all data in respect of the goods traffic of the colony, which are to be found only in the records of your department.

In conclusion, I beg, on behalf of the League, to state that the Railway Reform League has not been formed for the purpose of bandying words or disputing about the meaning of technical terms, but that it was called into existence with the object of securing a complete and thorough reformation in the administration of the railways of the colony, and this object it is determined to pursue