

124. You have been visiting these kauri forests, and making an approximate survey of their contents?—I have.

125. Could you supply the Commission with a report and map showing what you have done, and the manner in which you have made your estimate?—I could do so if you wish it. It is my duty to send a report to the head of my department.

*The Chairman* surmised that in that case the report would reach the Commission in due course. [For copy of report, see page 17.]

MONDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY, 1890.

Mr. THOMAS HULME BARSTOW examined.

126. *The Chairman.*] You are manager of the Kaihu Valley Railway, Mr. Barstow?—Yes.

127. You have handed in two returns showing the revenue and expenditure for twelve four-weekly periods?—Yes. [For copies of these returns, see page 18.]

128. I observe that the expenditure is slightly in excess of the revenue?—Yes—about £50.

129. Have you any statement or explanation to make in regard to that?—When the company took over the line they commuted the three months' maintenance which the contractors should have carried out for £150, whereas the actual charges were about £260 odd. Of course, the charge had to be borne out of working-expenses against maintenance.

130. How many men have you now engaged in maintenance?—Four.

131. Do you consider that is sufficient all the year round?—An average of six men all the year round.

132. What are you paying the maintenance-men?—7s. 6d. for the gangers, and 6s. for the platelayers.

133. Wet and dry?—Yes; wet and dry for half-time. The only others employed will be the engine-driver, fireman, and guard.

134. What do they receive?—The engineer 10s. 6d., fireman 8s., and the guard at present £80 a year. The engineer works a little over quarter-time, and the fireman a little over half-time. This arrangement of broken time has been in operation since the middle of May with respect to the maintenance-men, engineer, and fireman.

135. You are the only other?—I am the only other.

136. Can you say what are the total charges per month for wages, salaries, and all?—They average about £72 per month.

137. I think I noticed from the minutes that your salary is £350 a year and house?—Yes. Of course, I take the two duties.

138. You have no stations along the line; they are all worked as flag-stations?—Yes.

139. How many trains do you run per week?—Eight—four up and four down.

140. Your principal goods traffic, I presume, is kauri-gum?—Yes.

141. And a few stores?—Yes, and stores.

142. Have you formed any opinion as to the future traffic of the railway, exterior to the development of the kauri bushes?—There is only the gum that I know of, and as to that the only guide I have got is the number of men on the field: there are more diggers on the field than there ever was before. Of course, it all depends on the weather how long they stay on the field.

143. Have you noticed whether there is much through passenger traffic from Hokianga?—I have not noticed it, not knowing the Hokianga people.

144. At any rate, it is not sufficiently extensive to be noticeable?—No; except at race-meetings, when sixty to a hundred come down.

145. Has there been any proposal to utilise the timber that has been cut down in connection with the railway?—None whatever that I know of.

146. Now, in regard to rolling-stock, what have you got?—Two locomotives, Class A and Class F; one carriage, Class D, Price's build; one van, which is a composite brake-van, and sixteen wagons.

147. Is your rolling-stock in fairly good order?—One engine in thorough working-order—the F, the best one. A, wants £10 or £12 to put her in thorough condition; it just wants new brasses.

148. You require to send to Auckland, I presume, to have repairs effected?—Yes; but the driver, who is very clever, can do any running repairs. The wagons would require about £20 to put them up to Government standard.

149. If any large timber trade was commenced you would of course require additional rolling-stock?—Yes.

150. With regard to the wharf, can you say what is the depth there?—I have the Engineer's soundings. It appears to be about 21ft. at high-water mark at the wharf.

151. What is the range of tide?—About 12ft. I have never actually measured the range, so that is only hearsay. I would here like to make an explanation myself to this effect: that where the returns look so low it is on account of the exceptionally wet weather we had here in the winter time. The floods started in May, and lasted through June, July, and August; they were the heaviest known for twenty-two years.

152. I notice that in March you had returns higher than in any other month except January?—Yes; they were running full time, and there was a race meeting in Dargaville.

153. There is another thing I notice in the returns. In May there is a sudden drop in the receipts. I presume it would be somewhat due to the cessation in Fallon's contract?—Yes. Then I went to half-time, and it meant a difference of £50 a month. There were no privileges granted except to Mr. Fallon and his clerk.

154. *Mr. Monk.*] What are the sleepers made of?—Kauri.