

29. Then there seems to be an unnecessary delay between Christchurch and Lyttelton. You take forty-eight minutes to go that short distance?—You might, perhaps, save a few minutes there, but it must be remembered that there will always be some delay when you get to the steamer in transshipping passengers and mails and luggage.

30. It seems to me that you could save an hour in the Dunedin–Lyttelton service if you had a dining-car on the train?—You might save half an hour. Trains going south stop at Ashburton for three minutes, twenty minutes at Timaru, and five minutes at Oamaru, and three minutes at Palmerston South. On the north journey the stops are the same, except that twenty minutes are taken at Oamaru and five minutes at Timaru. You might possibly be able to take an hour off the whole service, but a certain amount of time is necessary for engine purposes.

31. My aspirations differ somewhat from those of our Chairman. I do not think you could get an eighteen-knot service between the North and South Islands. I think a twelve-hours service would be sufficient?—The “Rotomahana” now does it sometimes in twelve hours.

32. With a twelve-hours service the steamer could leave Lyttelton so as to arrive in Wellington at 6 o'clock in the morning?—The train for New Plymouth leaves at 6.50 a.m., and, indeed, very often does not get away till 7 o'clock.

33. That train could be put off until 7.30 o'clock, because, as you say yourself, you could save an hour and a half in the journey?—Yes.

34. I understand the Manawatu Company have been seeking to get this quicker service for years?—The late Commissioners of Railways made an offer to the company to run a quicker service to Palmerston.

35. I think if the department chose to meet the company it could be managed?—The relations between the department and the Manawatu Railway Company are of the most cordial nature; there is no hostility between us whatever.

36. If the Manawatu Company could save an hour and a half, then there is between New Plymouth and Hawera a stretch of level country, but there are a great number of stoppages there, are there not?—Yes; you would have to eliminate a number of those stoppages and then make provisions for the local traffic.

37. There is no other part of the country where there are so many stoppages as there?—It is just a question of eliminating those stoppages to increase the speed.

38. Are there not two or three trains daily there through which the local traffic could be done?—The local people like to travel by the quick train. It is not really an express service. It is called “express” between Palmerston North and Wellington, but it is a misnomer.

39. You would be able to leave Auckland on Monday afternoon, as now, and be in New Plymouth in the morning and then in Wellington at 8 p.m. without any difficulty?—That is so.

40. A steamer leaving at 9 o'clock the same evening would be in Lyttelton the following morning at 9 o'clock. Allowing for some delay in the transshipping of passengers, and so on, you would be able to be in Dunedin that evening at 7 o'clock, and you could leave as now for Invercargill the following morning. In that way you would be in Dunedin in forty-eight hours, and in Invercargill in two days and a half—is not that so?—Yes.

41. Tracing it north again, you could do the same thing if you will only move your trains in both the north and the south?—It could be done by cutting out stopping-places.

42. Yes; and particularly in Taranaki?—Yes; there are a large number of stopping-places between Hawera and New Plymouth; but then it must be remembered that on that part of the line there are only the old 40 lb. rails, and until those are changed, and 56 lb. steel rails laid in their place, we cannot increase the speed. As the cost of relaying would have to come out of ordinary expenditure, and not out of capital, it would be a very serious undertaking.

43. You think there is nothing to prevent the train getting in here at 8 o'clock and the steamer getting away at 9?—No.

44. Is it not very simple?—It seems very simple put in that way, but when you come to work it out and look into the details, and consider the large number of objections that would be raised, and the large amount of existing interests that would have to be considered, it is not such an easy matter.

45. *Mr. Joyce.*] Do you know at what time the steamer arrives at the Bluff from Australia?—I do not know; it is rather erratic, I believe.

46. Do they not usually arrive in the morning?—It depends upon the weather. I do not think they are very regular in their arrival.

47. Have you any passengers through by way of Clinton from the Australian steamer?—No; they would wait for the express on the following day. I have not known of any who have gone that way.

48. The Clinton train would be of no use to them?—No; they would go on by steamer to Dunedin.

49. Is it not a fact that the steamer gets into Dunedin some hours before the arrival of the mail train from Clinton?—It depends upon the detention at the Bluff, and if there is much cargo to land or tranship.

50. I know they do arrive the next morning at Dunedin, and the train from Clinton does not get in until 11 o'clock?—Yes.

51. So that it would be an advantage to delay the train at Invercargill until 2 o'clock. That would catch some of the Australian passengers?—Yes; you would certainly catch them.

52. What is the disadvantage to the branch lines connected with the Invercargill Section as compared with the North Canterbury branch lines?—They have not a connection to make, and there is no delay unless there is some undue detention.

53. They get into Christchurch at 9 o'clock at night?—Yes; the express does.

54. They go in by the express?—Yes.