

adverse weather on the trip to Lyttelton, the mail would have reached Dunedin all right, and have been delivered before business hours on Monday morning.

14. What I wish to understand is whether the time might be made more suitable?—The boats as a rule leave in the afternoon.

15. Is there a penalty arrangement?—No; but we get a good deal more out of the Union Company than—

16. I mean that the time of the railway running is not in arrangement with the steamers?—There were delays in regard to the last two San Francisco inward mails. And then, there was the Vancouver—

17. Then, do you not think it unsatisfactory that we should have a mail break down on the coast, and yet have to keep the main boats to their time?—Yes; but what can you do when you have a place like New Plymouth to deal with?

18. You said under the contract they were to keep the vessels under compulsion?—Yes, that is so.

19. And has your approbation?—I am speaking now about the San Francisco mail particularly; and I suppose you wish to know whether I consider the time taken for the transfer of the mails from Auckland to Onehunga is reasonable or not.

20. The whole thing is, do you consider three and a quarter hours' delay reasonable?—No. It was arranged between the Chief Postmaster and the agent of the Union Company that the steamer should leave Onehunga at noon. Without consultation with the Chief Postmaster the steamer's departure was altered to 12.30 p.m. A special train, however, would have been of no use, as it would not have reached Onehunga any earlier than the ordinary train leaving Auckland at 10.45 a.m., a quarter of an hour after the last of the southern mails had been placed on the train.

21. Yes; but for all that, you are responsible for it?—I do not know that.

22. But you are. You should have known that at 6 o'clock in the morning the steamer was signalled at Tiritiri?—But we had no such information; and we have had to complain of the failure to get advice from Tiritiri.

23. There is a very great neglect on the part of some of the officials of the Government, I think. Why is that so?—Well, I cannot admit that; it is not only the mails you have to handle, you have the southern passengers and cargo to see to also.

24. I do not think you need detain the steamer much longer for that?—Oh, yes, you have.

25. You have stated about the cargo. The mail-boat was able to be signalled at half-past 6 in the morning. You fixed the Onehunga steamer sailing at half-past 12; there is no reason why it should not have been advertised for half-past 10. Would not this proposed fast service have initiated the stoppage of all those special trains: that is to say, if you have only the daily service between here and Lyttelton—a service leaving Wellington at 9 o'clock at night—the whole thing would depend on that; the mail would always catch it, and there would be no need for special trains?—You would have to have a special train at times.

26. It gets to this: the Auckland steamer leaving Auckland and coming down, and then the mail being taken on by the railway to Wellington, then by steamboat to Lyttelton, and on down South by train. You would get rid of all these subdivisions on which you spend so much money?—Yes, we should get rid of a good many. We spent £1,009 last year on special trains.

27. I do not think you needed to have expended that £1,000 a year?—Well, you know, it is impossible for the steamer from Wellington to connect always with the express from Christchurch to Dunedin.

28. *The Chairman*: That is on the assumption that we retain these slow-going steamers.

29. *Mr. Duthie*: I wish to point out that the need at the present time would be obviated by this special service. With this quick service you would have no occasion to put on specials, because you would not get a steamer available.

30. *Mr. Gray* (witness): The Vancouver service is now responsible for heaviest expense in connection with specials. But for the adverse weather there would have been a second steamer here on the Saturday available for the southern portion of the Vancouver mail. You cannot altogether control these things.

31. *Mr. Duthie*: I think there ought to be some arrangement for a steamer to attend when the mail is due.

32. *Mr. Gray*: Yes, there is such an arrangement. There was a steamer; but, instead of leaving in the afternoon, it did not leave until 11 o'clock at night. I do not recollect the name of the second boat which would have been here but for unfavourable weather.

33. *Mr. Duthie*.] The West Coast is extremely regular?—Yes, it is; but it needs some arrangement to get everything right.

34. Yes; all we get is excuses, and the service is not performed?—I think, taking the service from one year's end to another, it is fairly well performed indeed.

35. I mean the Vancouver service. That service has either broken down or is on the way to it. It is your not having any satisfactory arrangements for the superintending at this end. We get extensions but no proper delivery?—Circumstances have happened which could not be controlled. It was not to be foreseen that the company would have to go into liquidation, and that, among other things, the steamers would have been seized, and the time-table interrupted for several months.

[At the close of his evidence the witness handed in several tabulated returns.]