

In addition to the inconvenience caused to passengers from the South, the early departure of the express from Dunedin would necessitate an earlier start or accelerated running from Dunedin to Palmerston of the preceding mixed train which now picks up passengers at all stations between Dunedin and Palmerston and lands them at the latter station in time to go on by express if they so desire. The earlier starting of this train would seriously inconvenience the workmen and other passengers by whom it is now used, and its acceleration would necessitate a reduction in load and consequent running, at a cost of £2,900 per annum, of additional trains to overtake traffic.

The alteration in the running of the north-going express would be acutely felt by passengers at the various stopping-stations *en route*. It would be two hours and a half earlier than at present throughout. Passengers from Timaru for north would require to leave at 2.37 p.m., instead of at 5.7 p.m.; Ashburton passengers at 4.35, instead of at 7.5 p.m.

The time allowed for the steamer journey between Lyttelton and Wellington is eleven hours only, with one hour and a quarter of a break at Wellington to permit luggage and passengers to get from wharf to Manawatu Railway Company's Station. If the steamer were delayed by stress of weather for any period greater than half an hour it would miss the train, which could not be held. The steamer would therefore require to be capable of averaging a speed of sixteen knots per hour in all weathers. The train-service from Wellington to New Plymouth is based on a thirteen-hours-and-a-half journey, so that train would require to leave Wellington not later than 8 a.m. to reach New Plymouth at 9.30 p.m. To enable the journey to be accomplished in this time the loads will require to be considerably reduced, necessitating the running of extra trains at an additional cost of over £6,000 per annum, over and above the £5,000 additional cost under scheme No. 2 for a fast service, Wanganui to New Plymouth, on two days per week. If the through train to Woodville and Napier *via* Wairarapa is held in Wellington to connect with the steamer, the service on that line will be upset, the arrival of the through trains at both Wellington and Napier will be considerably delayed, and inconvenience will arise. Passengers who regularly travel by the trains in question consider that the present hours of arrival—viz., 7.25 p.m. at Napier, and 8.25 p.m. at Wellington—are late enough.

The starting of the Wairarapa train from Wellington before the arrival of the steamer would be calculated to alienate traffic from the Government to the Manawatu Company's line.

With regard to the utility of improved service, such as outlined in No. 3, in replacing mail specials, I find that the total amount paid by the Postal Department for special trains run for conveyance of mails during the year ending the 31st March last was £948, of which sum £141 was paid to the Wellington and Manawatu Railway Company. This amount, even if saved by the new service, would not be worth considering when compared with the increased expenditure which the new train-services would involve, apart altogether from the question of cost in connection with the equipment and maintenance of fast steamers capable of running between Lyttelton and Wellington in eleven hours in any weather.

The remarks applied to No. 3 are equally applicable to No. 4 alternative service, which is identical with No. 3 so far as times, mileages, and cost are concerned. As already stated, No. 2 proposal provides for an excellent through service, which can be still further improved by an arrangement for the Union Steamship Company's steamer to wait at Lyttelton for the arrival of the express passengers from Dunedin on Mondays and Wednesdays, instead of leaving at 6 p.m. as at present.

The additional cost of service outlined in No. 2 proposal is estimated at £5,000 per annum.

It must be distinctly understood that the proposals, as outlined herein and on the diagrams which are being placed before members of the Committee, simply show what could be done if it were desired to run a fast through service regardless of cost and the inconvenience that would arise through the upsetting of all present arrangements. They must not be taken as an indication that the department is prepared to recommend their adoption, or as being in any way binding on the department.

37. *The Chairman* (to witness).] You have set out very fully all the disadvantages attending the proposed alterations, but can you not give us some of the advantages to the majority of the public of the colony?—I think that so far as the North Island is concerned it will be a distinct advantage. The North Island would benefit more largely from this fast service than the South.

*Mr. Lewis* : That is just the attitude of the southern members; that is why we are here.

*Mr. Ronayne* : I believe the North Island would benefit from it more largely.

38. *The Chairman* (to witness).] But with facilities for reaching Auckland from Invercargill in three days, as compared with five or six days at the present time, and for all intermediate localities in proportion, do you not think that the improved service would tend generally to increase the traffic?—It certainly would have that tendency. It would divert the passengers to a considerable extent from the coastal steamers to the railways.

39. You have told us that the Postal Department paid £948 for special trains. *Mr. Gray's* evidence was £1,009?—We said about £1,000. My figures do not give the total amount paid by the Postal Department for the whole colony, but the amount paid by that department for mail specials run on the main through lines between New Plymouth and Longburn, and Lyttelton southwards in connection with the 'Frisco mail.

40. He gave us the exact figures. However, this charge is paid one way only?—That is so. They travel one hundred miles for about one hundred five-shillings—i.e., for £25. If it was a train from Christchurch to Timaru—about a hundred miles—they pay one way only, and that is one hundred miles at 5s. per mile.

41. What is the cost to the department, roughly?—The statistics for the year ended 31st March were for running a general mail-train, 4s. 8d.

42. Therefore, if the Postal Department pay you 5s. only, you only halve the cost?—Just a fraction over half the cost. They pay 2s. 6d. a mile.

43. Therefore, if these numerous specials were superseded by a continuous, regular, and fast