

7. *Mr. Buchanan.*] What about the local return tickets?—These are the totals. There were 137 return tickets. We only actually took money for 336. These 137 were probably included in the return given you by the Union Company. The steerage bookings were 206, and the returns 82; leaving a balance of tickets of about 124.

8. *The Chairman.*] What are the passenger-rates between Lyttelton and Wellington in each class, and return?—Lyttelton to Wellington, saloon (single), £1; steerage (single), 10s.; saloon (return), £1 15s.; steerage (return), 17s. 6d.

9. *Mr. Duthie.*] Is this rate by both companies?—Yes.

10. *The Chairman.*] Is the “Elingamite” a recently built steamer?—No; she was built some years ago, in 1887.

11. When was the “Westralia” built?—In 1897—last year.

12. Do you consider the “Westralia” a favourite boat with the public?—Extremely so. People wait for her.

13. To what do you attribute this?—She has a very nice saloon, her sleeping-cabins are on the main deck, and she is a wonderfully steady boat. She is very flat on the floors.

14. What is her beam?—She is 41 ft. 2 in.; length, 327 ft. 4 in.; depth, 20 ft. 5 in.

15. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Can you tell the Committee what was the cost of the “Westralia”?—No, I cannot.

16. Supposing a local service of 12 knots from port to port, or 11 knots from port to port, were established, would you anticipate a large increase in passenger traffic?—No; I would not.

17. Supposing that a favourite fast boat were put on the line, do not you anticipate that would increase the number of passengers travelling per annum?—I do not think so. The number of people who want a fast passage is essentially limited; the people do not care whether they come up in twelve or fourteen hours. Those who are anxious to make a short passage are comparatively small.

18. Supposing that a steamer were to fit in with the train arrangements—say, that the line was completed to Auckland, and that the train arrived in Wellington from the North to catch the steamer leaving at 9 o'clock at night, so that a passenger might catch the express in Christchurch at 10 o'clock next morning, arriving in Dunedin a couple of hours sooner than now, and getting into Invercargill early the next day—do not you think that would stimulate traffic very considerably?—I do not think so. There would be only a few passengers who would require to go direct from Auckland to Invercargill. It would be very nice to have the journey shortened for those people who desire to travel that way—a few business people, but not the general public.

19. Assuming that the “Westralia” was of the speed to travel the distance regularly in extreme weather in twelve hours, what would it cost to make a profit on the year's work, supposing that there were two steamers like her going between Lyttelton and Wellington?—I could not say.

20. *Mr. Duthie.*] Your office has an important interest in the colony?—Yes; we run around from Dunedin to Sydney.

21. Do you think, if tenders were invited for an efficient service, connecting with the train, that it is likely your company would tender?—I cannot speak for the company, but, speaking generally, I should think they would. I have no knowledge of the matter. I have never discussed the matter.

22. Your company entered into an arrangement with the Union Company, about two years ago, whereby you work together and interchange passages. Would that prohibit you from tendering?—I do not know; I have not seen the agreement. The Huddart-Parker Company are anxious to cultivate trade in New Zealand. There is another boat on the stocks for the colonial trade.

23. Do you think that if tenders were called for this trade we would have a *bond fide* offer from your company?—I do not know anything of the working of the company. We are not the head agents in New Zealand.

24. Have you an acquaintance with the shipping interests in Australia?—I have not. I know a good deal about shipping, but I have never been in business in Australia.

25. What do you think is the amount the Government would have to give for such a service if we were likely to get a vote for such?—I do not think you will have any difficulty in getting it, but you will have to pay for it.

26. You think we should have the steamers ourselves?—They will cost a lot of money. I do not think there is enough trade to support them.

27. Before you go I wish to know if you had seen Mr. Mills's evidence, or if it was submitted to you?—I had no knowledge of it, except what appeared in the Press Association message in the Christchurch papers.

28. *The Chairman.*] With a view of expediting the journey between Wellington and Lyttelton so as to reduce the time to an eleven-hours service, what tonnage and power of steamer would you recommend?—I think the class of boat used by the London and South-western Railway Company between Southampton and Havre—perhaps a little bigger—say, 300 ft. long instead of 270 ft. These steamers are called the “Columbia” and “Alma.” They accomplish the journey between the two ports, a distance of about 140 knots, in seven hours, and never miss the train at either end in any weather. They carry 104 saloon passengers and a good number of steerage. Twin-screws.