

increasing the speed somewhat, we can give the people in the whole colony a better opportunity of making a prompt reply. I think you can manage with a day later with the arrival of the Homeward mail at San Francisco without inconvenience. You now reach San Francisco to catch the German steamer on Tuesdays. If you only get there on the following day you catch the White Star steamer on the Wednesday. That is a day there you can have?—Yes; fourteen days are allowed between San Francisco and London.

9. That is so, but will you put the position more clearly before us? And we also want the comparison as between Auckland and Wellington. You can get mails later from the South to catch boats at Wellington than if they go on to Auckland. I think that will be made clear by your drawings?—Yes.

10. And we could have from you, as head of the department, a statement of what you can recommend from your experience?—Do you not think that ought to be from the Minister?—It appears to me a question of policy.

11. That is as you please?—The question as to whether a 15-knot or a 16-knot service should be recommended, I think, is a matter for the Minister.

12. Your opinion depends on the Minister's?—No, I would still have my opinion.

13. Have you any opinion about better-class steamers?—Yes, I can give you my opinion.

14. *Mr. McLean*: How often has the Frisco mail been late at Auckland?—Two or three times, I think, since April last—arriving on Wednesday instead of Tuesday.

15. What boats were they?—I do not remember. It was, however, no fault of the steamers; the mails were late in reaching San Francisco. Moreover, the contract gives a margin of forty-eight hours in the delivery at Auckland.

16. How often have the fines been imposed?—Twice, I think, within the last four or five years.

17. Only twice?—Yes, only twice.

18. I have frequently noticed, with respect to the outgoing mail, that the direct and the Frisco steamer go out at the same time. What is the object of the two mails going out together?—We cannot avoid that.

19. Could it not be arranged that the Frisco should go out, say, on the 1st January, and the other boat, say, on the 15th?—No; that is a matter for the shipping companies, whom we do not control. They have dates of their own, and frame time-tables without regard to our arrangements, and we, of course, do not consider the shipping companies' sailings. As regards the Vancouver service time-table, it provides for connecting with the New York fast boats.

20. As regards the mail to Napier, do not they compare rather unfavourably in point of time, considering the distance from Auckland, with other places?—No, I think not.

21. For instance, I notice the Frisco mail often arrives at Auckland just after the steamer going down the East Coast has left, and on their going down the West Coast they come on to Wellington as a rule?—No; they are generally landed at New Plymouth, and transferred at Palmerston North. Frequently they are sent by special from Palmerston to Dannevirke to catch the morning train from there, so as to reach Napier about midday, instead of by the through train arriving in the evening.

22. Which place gets its mails first, Wellington or Napier?—Wellington.

23. Although it is two hundred miles further?—No, the distance is not further.

24. On the whole, since this Frisco line has been established it has been regular?—It has been fairly regular. It is not, of course, to be expected that the mails, as a rule, should be forwarded by special trains. As already stated, the Napier portions of the San Francisco mails are sent from Auckland by the East Coast steamers whenever they suit.

25. I mean you find, as regards the English mail, it has been generally pretty regular all through the service?—Yes.

26. Of course, with regard to the other mails, you have no control?—No, we have none, except where there is a subsidised service.

27. *Mr. Buchanan*.] By the communication you made to the Committee I understood that six hours would be the limit for reply from Invercargill?—Yes, about six hours.

28. That would contemplate no detention or interruption whatever from bad weather, or any other cause?—No. The mail on arriving at Dunedin would be sent on by special train to Invercargill, and arrive about 4 o'clock in the morning. That afternoon the return mail would be sent to Clinton to connect at Dunedin next day with the express for Christchurch.

29. Supposing you had a special from New Plymouth, and had it ready there to receive the mails and take them right through, could not you save time?—Not always; it would depend when the mails arrive there. About fourteen hours have been allowed between New Plymouth and Wellington for delivery by steamer. But if, in addition to the expense of bringing the mails by steamer to New Plymouth, you are on every occasion to provide special trains that would materially add to the cost.

30. Putting the question of expense on one side, would you not, as a matter of fact, be able to give the Invercargill people more than six hours if you had a special train from New Plymouth to Wellington?—You could get more than six hours by sending a special from Invercargill.

31. *The Chairman*.] To Clinton?—To Dunedin, or even to Clinton. The special need not leave Invercargill until about midnight.

32. *Mr. Buchanan*.] So that one way or the other you could considerably better your six hours' limit for Invercargill?—Yes.

33. As head of the department, and taking into account the importance of the mail to business-people, would you not recommend the extra expense being incurred?—With Invercargill only?

34. Including Invercargill; but also, of course, there would be an accelerated service generally which would entail money being spent?—The sketch time-table of mine provides for a reasonable delivery at a minimum cost.