

12. But, of course, the two American boats are out of date with regard to sanitary arrangements and other matters?—They are not up to date in their appointments, but they continue to maintain a high rate of speed. Although they have been running about sixteen years they can still steam $14\frac{1}{2}$ knots.

13. In connection with that fortnightly service with San Francisco, we have evidence from Mr. Mills, and it is said we could get a more prompt reply by having a fortnightly running—that is, they could despatch from Auckland eight days after arrival?—Yes; you could do that with a fortnightly service of 15 knots, which would give Invercargill a day for replies.

14. What do you think are the requirements for this service?—It is difficult to say. If you want a fortnightly mail-service, one at 15 knots would be more satisfactory than the present speed. You cannot get what you want with the present days of arrival and departure at and from San Francisco—replies from one end of the colony to the other—by any service under 15 knots. To secure replies by the Vancouver line you would need a 16-knot service, and that you are not likely to get at present.

15. In the evidence before us it is calculated that by an altered service, and making an exchange of steamers, we can get regular communication from Auckland to Invercargill in forty-eight hours?—That will indeed be a great gain if it can be effected.

16. Will that assist you very much?—Yes, very much. We now allow about thirty-two hours between the arrival of the steamer at Auckland and delivery of the mails at Wellington. I omitted to mention on Thursday that there were two other cases of delay. There was the unfortunate missing of the tide by the "Takapuna" last month, and the delay last Thursday morning to the "Rotoiti," which had to return to the Onehunga Wharf owing to a strong south-west breeze and ebb-tide, and wait until the afternoon.

17. Of course, there are difficulties of distribution from Auckland on account of the tidal difficulties. I may explain that it is calculated in this Committee that the mail closing any day would catch the train at Taranaki, and should reach us here at 8 o'clock in the evening?—That is, if they accelerated the trains.

18. Yes; that without great difficulty they can leave the Manukau, go round to New Plymouth, and reach here by 8 o'clock in the evening; that the steamer could catch the express at Lyttelton at the present time, the mail reaching Dunedin that night and Invercargill about 3 o'clock the next day. On returning, allowing for country mails coming into Invercargill and the train leaving at 2 o'clock instead of in the forenoon, as at present, the mails would be able to reach Dunedin at 9 o'clock in the evening. Leaving again by express they would reach the steamer at Lyttelton at about 5.30 p.m., and reach here (Wellington) at about 8 o'clock a.m. to catch the Manawatu train and get into New Plymouth at night, and thence to the Manukau next day. It only means arrangements between the Postal Department, the Railway Department, and the Manawatu Company to get this particular thing done?—Of course, this means a complete alteration of present arrangements.

19. But, suppose that was done, would it not improve your whole service?—Very materially.

20. Does anything stand in your way?—Nothing, except the question of expense.

20A. Perhaps you have not followed the Lyttelton and Wellington Steam-service Committee's report?—I have followed the evidence and read the report. I think the proposals are practicable, and, if carried out, the Vancouver and Frisco mail time would, of course, be shortened very considerably.

21. And your time-table shortened?—Yes, of course.

22. According to your time-table you at present get to San Francisco on a Wednesday. If you arrive there on Thursday you will still catch the White Star steamer at New York?—Yes, I have indicated this in my memorandum.

23. Is it not possible to do this?—Yes, if you make the New Zealand departure a day later. It, however, means a Sunday departure from Auckland—that is the trouble.

24. My own impression is that a 15-knot boat is wanted, and that these American boats are out of date; and if we are going to start services against the Suez Canal lines better steamers are required?—That is true. There is a paucity of passengers across the Pacific. The service ought to be more attractive.

25. *Mr. McLean.*] Taking it for all in all, I suppose Wellington would be the best centre for distribution for America, both North and South?—No, not for North and South.

26. But leaving Auckland out of the question?—Yes.

27. And it would be better for the South, would it not?—To the extent of about ten hours. But, of course, you have to consider this: that if you have this proposed fast service between Wellington and Lyttelton, and materially reduce the time between the Manukau and Wellington, as indicated by Mr. Duthie, there would probably be no gain at all.

28. What is the speed supposed to be on the Atlantic side?—Twenty knots, and even twenty-three sometimes.

29. When the mails are delayed which end of the line is it generally—going from here or coming over?—Coming this way. Particularly about this time of the year, when the Atlantic steamers have to face westerly gales. The steamers are now due to leave San Francisco on Wednesday, but I very much doubt whether they will be able to get away on Wednesday during the winter on account of the longer passages across the Atlantic.

30. *Mr. Duthie.*] Who has control of the passage across America? You have no control, I suppose?—No, the United States Post Office.

31. Because they do not send them across by the fastest route sometimes?—We have the assurance of the Washington Post Office that they do so.

32. *Mr. McLean.*] Do they use the fastest boats across the Atlantic?—Yes; our time-tables are framed for the mails to connect with the fastest boats, but their running is liable to be changed from time to time. We cannot prevent this.