

*Railway Charges, North and South.*

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,—Under the above heading a paragraph appears in your issue of the 17th instant, in which it is stated that the charge for the conveyance of passengers' luggage in Otago is at the rate of one-third of a penny ( $\frac{1}{3}$ d.) per mile, while in Auckland it is twopence and one-third ( $2\frac{1}{3}$ d.) per mile. I have very little doubt this statement is correct, and what follows will, I think, justify me in saying this.

During last year a substantial reduction was made in the transit charge for goods. It amounted to  $5\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton for every ton carried over the lines of the whole colony. But this is how the reduction was distributed: Canterbury and Otago secured a reduction of 8d. per ton; Wellington, Napier, and Taranaki,  $6\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton; Auckland, only  $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton.

To put it another way, £57,775 of the public revenue was expended for the benefit of Canterbury and Otago in the reduction of railway rates; £11,872 for Wellington, Hawke's Bay, and Taranaki between them; and for Auckland, only £3,441, or, say, three and three-quarter times as much for the benefit of Canterbury and Otago alone as for the whole of the North Island.

When we remember that on the average goods are carried much shorter distances on the Huru-nui-Bluff Section than they are on any of the North Island sections, and more particularly on the Auckland lines, the injustice done to us becomes still more apparent, for the greatest reduction made has been for the shortest, and not, as it ought to have been, for the longest distance travelled.

When I first took up railway matters, every district outside Canterbury and Otago was charged at least 25 per cent. more than these favoured provinces. At the inquiry of 1886, I succeeded in getting this great wrong redressed; but it will be seen from what is stated above that, although in the tariff the charges are said to be the same in every district, the railway officials practically have the power to fix rates as they please. This will always be the case until we find a method of making a simple but fixed railway tariff, and one that can be understood by every one. This I claim to have done.

I am, &amp;c.,

Auckland, 20th May, 1901.

SAMUEL VAILE.

## No. 21.

REPORT of ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER on MR. VAILE'S CIRCULAR LETTER of the 22nd May, 1901.

Wellington, 6th June, 1901.

WITH reference to Mr. Vaile's letter of the 22nd May, referred to you by the Hon. the Minister for Railways, I have to state that Mr. Vaile's letter of the 20th May to the *New Zealand Herald* gives no explicit information as to the basis upon which he founds his statements. I am, therefore, only able to surmise what his premises are. In the first place, he states that last year the transit charge for goods was substantially reduced by an amount equal to  $5\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton for every ton carried over the lines of the whole colony. He then goes on to state that this amounted in Canterbury and Otago to a reduction of 8d. per ton; in Wellington, Napier, and Taranaki to  $6\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton, and in Auckland to only  $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton. These statements do not take into account the classes of goods carried, or the distances carried in the respective districts. They are, I conclude, arrived at by dividing the tonnage carried in the provinces alluded to into the amount of revenue received for goods, irrespective, as I have before stated, of the classes of goods carried and the distances.

Now, if we come to analyse the matter, we find that the grain rates were reduced by 20 per cent., and were reduced to *exactly the same extent* in Auckland, Wellington, Napier, Taranaki, Canterbury, and Otago. If, therefore, the grain traffic in Auckland bore in volume the same relation to the other classes of traffic that it bears in Canterbury and Otago, and the distances carried were equal, then the reduction per ton enjoyed by Auckland must of necessity be exactly the same as Canterbury, Otago, and elsewhere, because the reduction was uniform throughout the colony. If, on the other hand, the amount of grain—as is the case—carried in Auckland is small in relation to other classes of traffic as compared with elsewhere, then it follows that the reduction per ton in Auckland computed for all classes of traffic would not bear the same relation as the reduction per ton on the whole of the traffic in Canterbury and Otago does in consequence of the before-mentioned reduction of 20 per cent. on grain.

Such arguments, therefore, are useless unless one is prepared to quote a universal rate for all distances and for all classes of goods. Even Mr. Vaile himself has not hitherto ventured to frame a tariff on these lines.

C. HUDSON.

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