

understand all right the practical suggestions he has made of his own system—as to how it should be put into operation, and as to how it should be carried out. The only thing that the Government of the colony would require to be satisfied about before we could adopt such a system generally in New Zealand would be where it is going to land us, and that, I take it, could only be judged by our giving it a practical trial under conditions which could be decided on, and until that can be decided upon it is unnecessary to put Mr. Vaile through a category of questions. The system has been explained profusely, and I do not think there is any further information as regards the details that we want. Unless members of the Committee want it, I do not want it. After the evidence is in print, and we have got it, I will then go into the matter with the responsible officers of the railway, and place before the Committee a memorandum dealing with the matter. I understand Mr. Vaile's system fairly well, so by my not questioning you, Mr. Vaile, you will understand there is no discourtesy meant, but that it is unnecessary.

28. *The Chairman.*] First of all, as to the cost of the carriage of this increased traffic compared with Hungary and Russia, Mr. Vaile, have you ever considered the actual cost of carrying each passenger per mile in New Zealand?—No; I could not tell you that—only that they carry them at a less price than I propose. The actual cost of carrying a passenger in England in half-full trains is 1d. for every thirty miles. We can do it quite as cheaply here.

29. Where—In Hungary or in Russia?—In both countries. In Hungary, 457 miles for 3s. 4d.

30. You are aware that the railways here are controlled by the State?—Yes.

31. And that if the railways are not satisfactory the first thing will be that a member will run to the Minister and see that an extra guard or man is put on?—Yes. I say, in regard to the question of State administration and private administration in the world over, that the State administration is the best. They (the railways) are more successfully administered by the State throughout Europe than by the private companies.

32. The Auckland Section at present is 330 miles: that cost the colony £2,500,000?—Yes.

33. Do you know how much the colony is losing at the present time on it?—I say, if you adopt my system you will not lose anything.

34. Do you know what the population of Auckland is?—I suppose it is about 176,000.

35. Now, you reckon that you would get four passengers under your system to the one that the department is now getting?—Yes, I think so.

36. How many times would the whole population of Auckland have to travel to achieve that?—I have not worked it out.

37. Do you think that they would be always travelling, or would they have any time to stop at home?—It would take them a good many more than four times to do that.

38. Do you think that if you carried them for nothing they would travel?—Yes; but I do not think that would be any advantage or inducement to people to travel for nothing. I do not think it would be an inducement, because people who get things for nothing do not value them.

39. How long has this table of Mr. Fife's been worked out?—It was worked out in 1886.

40. That is fifteen years ago?—My comparisons, you must bear in mind, are all drawn with this table.

41. Mr. Napier is under the impression that you have achieved what you told the Government fifteen years ago would be the result: have you taken into consideration the increased population in proportion to the increased mileage of railways opened? Can you tell me how many miles of railway were open fifteen years ago?—I have it in some of the pamphlets I have published. In 1885 the total number of miles open in New Zealand was 1,479.

42. So that during the last fifteen years the total mileage opened has practically doubled?—2,212 miles, if I remember rightly.

43. Now, do you know what the population was fifteen years ago?—No, I could not tell what it was.

44. In the countries you were dealing with, especially in Hungary, the population is practically stationary, and the railway system is practically stationary—the miles of railway opened were practically stationary, and also the population?—I beg your pardon: there was an enormous increase in population, and also in railway mileage.

45. Will you explain to me, Mr. Vaile, if you know the increased mileage opened during the last fifteen years, and the increased population in the last fifteen years?—You will find it is the same, as a rule, in every country. The more you increase the length of the mileage the greater is the proportionate cost of working the railways.

46. Do you know what the Auckland Section is paying at present per cent., and what the net revenue from it is—it is £2 7s. 9d.?—Give me a chance, and I will make it pay three times that.

47. Besides that, we have to pay another £150,000 a year by the way of additions to open new lines, have we not?—That is because it is not worked properly.

48. So the taxpayer of the colony has to pay at least £200,000 a year to keep the Auckland Section going. Do you know what extra rolling-stock would have to be provided?—That is the Traffic Manager's business.

49. Have you considered that phase of the question at all—what extra accommodation would have to be provided to achieve the result you propose?—At the last Committee I was before, Mr. Hannay distinctly said that on the Hurunui-Bluff Section they only carried seven passengers in a carriage; that was the average. I have many times travelled in a 10-ton carriage, and had it all to myself for thirty, forty, or fifty miles. Of course, there would be certain crowded points at which you would have to put more rolling-stock on.

50. *Mr. Lawry.*] Did you say, Mr. Vaile, that this table you referred to of Mr. Fife's was compiled by him in 1885 or 1886?—In 1886.

51. Was that a period of great prosperity in the colony, or of depression?—It was a very dull time.