

29. Well, seeing that the passenger traffic to Taupo would not be anything like the traffic to Rotorua, would the company's line be fit to run a motor train?—It certainly would not run the motor train we are running from Auckland to Henderson. We could not get our engines round the $1\frac{1}{2}$ -chain curves.

30. It would not be necessary to have such a heavy line for a motor engine?—No, that is a train consisting of one car. If the train consisted of one or two cars the line would run such a light train.

31. *The Chairman.*] Do you know anything about the bridges on that line?—The bridges were designed by a thoroughly competent man, an ex-engineer of the Public Works Department; and I think they would be satisfactory. I did not examine them. I did not get off the railway.

32. When an Order in Council gives permission to carry passengers, do you insist that the line should be inspected, and, if so, how often?—The law requires that the line shall be inspected before passengers can be carried over it. There is no period stated as to how frequently the line should be inspected afterwards; but it can be inspected whenever the Minister of Public Works so directs.

33. If an expert stated that the Department did not demand any standard of efficiency in the permanent-way where passengers were allowed to be carried, would that be correct?—I should say it is quite incorrect. The Order in Council does not contain any particular clause saying that a certain degree of efficiency shall be arrived at; but it is safeguarded by a provision that the line shall not be used for traffic without being inspected and passed. The inference is that the Department would require a certain degree of efficiency.

34. Can you tell us how often surfacemen go over the ordinary Government lines to inspect them?—Every day, without exception.

35. As passengers have been carried on a line by permission of the State, do you demand, then, that it shall be inspected every day? The Department is not aware that passengers are carried on the line; but some may travel occasionally, as it would probably be impossible without a force of policemen to prevent passengers using it occasionally.

36. You are aware, of course, that the company has stated through its solicitor that if it did offer the line to the Government it would be properly repaired in accordance with the demands of the State?—No, I am not aware of that.

37. I might ask you as to the class of timber used in the bridges?—As the company is a timber company, I should think the bridges would be first class.

38. I hear that some of the sleepers on the line are rimu; but mainly the official report says the line is in very good condition?—Yes; some of the sleepers originally used on the Government lines were rimu.

39. *Mr. Fraser.*] After the line had been once passed by the Government, and the license was granted to carry passengers, would there be any further responsibility on the part of the Government to see that the line was maintained in that state of efficiency which it might deem advisable?—There is no responsibility.

40. I do not mean responsibility for accidents, but would the Government feel themselves called upon to see that the line was maintained properly—what is the practice?—The Government does not usually feel itself called upon to make an inspection unless moved to do so by receiving complaints.

41. With regard to the Manawatu Railway, which was a private line, the Government did not make any inspection of that line, did they?—Yes, on two or three occasions.

42. There was no regular inspection of the line?—No regular periodical inspection.

43. *Mr. Reed.*] What guarantee do you get from the owners of private lines that they will keep up the maintenance of the line in the same way that the Government do—that is to say, the Government have surfacemen spread over the line who are constantly watching its upkeep?—Do you mean that we require a company to enter into any bond?

44. In what way do you safeguard the interests of the passengers in the future?—There is full provision for that in the Public Works Act, enabling the Minister to inspect the line at any time.

45. The only safeguard is that you have the power; and presumably you would ascertain whether there was any laxity on the part of a private company in the upkeep of the line?—That is so. We have full power to cancel the license.

46. Some small defect may be allowed—for instance, the sleepers might be changed?—The company is fully liable in damages. If an accident occurred on a railway through negligence, they have full responsibility at law. In addition, we have a full power of inspection under the Public Works Act.

47. *Mr. Dalziel.*] You say this line was originally laid with second-hand rails?—Yes, I understand so. The report made by the Government Engineer who first inspected the line stated that that was so. Possibly he was misinformed. I have no other information than that.

48. The whole line was laid with new rails, purchased in England, 30 lb. in weight?—I have no information about that.

49. With regard to the question of speed: when you spoke about the train taking eight hours, you were speaking of the timber trains?—That is the only train running that I am aware of.

50. Do you know that an engine goes through in four hours—an "A" engine?—An "A" engine can probably do it in that time. I went through in about six hours myself.

51. You were inspecting it part of the way?—I went to have a general inspection—not in detail. I did not get out of the train and walk over the formation.

52. What is the average rate of Government goods-trains?—I cannot say.

53. It is pretty slow, is it not?—Yes, except the long-distance through goods-trains.

[Mr. Blow desires to state that in answering a question he incorrectly replied that he was under the impression that the rails were not new when laid.]