

so that their wool can be brought down in December when there is yet sufficient water in the river. This seems a very simple way out of the difficulty, but some of the settlers may be unable to secure shearers at the right time. Mr. Hatrick informed us it was his intention to erect a collecting-shed at Kokakonui, the wool would be removed from the different landings in small quantities and taken to the collecting-shed, and a large steamer sent up to remove it as the state of the river permitted. This arrangement, if given effect to and executed in good faith, should, in our opinion, do much to remedy the grievance of settlers under this head.

(3.) *Loss of Goods through their not being landed sufficiently high up on the River-banks.*—It is not disputed that losses of this kind have occurred, and some of the complainants have the suspicion that had they been doing business with Messrs. Hatrick and Co. their goods would have been placed in security. It must be remembered, however, that the river rises very rapidly, as much as 7 ft. or 8 ft. in twenty-four hours, and in flood-time even more. The banks of the river are mostly very steep, and if goods had to be carried up any considerable distance the cost of handling would not only be increased but the steamer would be delayed, and the regularity of the service very seriously interfered with. Mr. Hatrick says that settlers should claim their goods promptly and not leave them at the mercy of the river. The settlers, on the other hand, many of whom live seven or eight miles back from the river, state that they never know when their goods are coming. We heard it stated again and again that settlers had lost their time in coming to the river repeatedly for goods which had not arrived. Such delays are, of course, liable to occur in any service. A good deal of the trouble, we think, should be overcome as telephonic communication is extended to the different settlements on the river. Consignees should then obtain information when goods are coming, and take prompt steps to claim their supplies. We think telephone extension in the valley should be pushed on as rapidly as possible.

(4.) *Excessive and Irregular Fares.*—The settlers as a rule do not complain seriously of the passenger charges. There were a few, however, who thought the passenger fares on the upper reaches of the river were excessive. Seeing the difficulty of navigating this part of the river we hardly think the complaint justified. Other complaints were made that between intermediate points on the river the charges varied. Messrs. Hatrick and Co. should be called upon to disclose every fare levied by them between different points.

(5.) *Poor Food and Insufficient.*—Two or three of the settlers complained that the food supplied on the steamers was badly cooked and insufficient in quantity. The charge for meals served on the steamer is 2s. We would hardly expect to find the table on such steamers, with their restricted appliances, a luxurious one. There is probably not much in the complaint. The bulk of the settlers had no fault to find in this respect.

(6.) *Comfort of Passengers not studied.*—Complaints were made that no attempt was made to study the comfort of passengers in cold weather by protecting the decks from the elements or putting in hot-water pipes; also that journeys were often commenced at an early hour on cold and miserable mornings without it being possible to secure a cup of hot coffee or such simple refreshment. There may be room for this complaint, but we are bound to say it is easier to make the complaint than suggest the remedy, taking all the circumstances into consideration.

(7.) *Settlers only allowed to travel Down-river on Two Boats a Week during Tourist Season.*—This complaint was made by settlers between Taumarunui and Kokakonui. The explanation of this is that certain boats are run through as quickly as possible for the benefit of tourists. The company does not wish to inconvenience tourists by crowding them together with Natives and ordinary wayside passengers on the small boats. It is in the interest of the tourist traffic to land travellers at Pipiriki at a fairly early hour in the evening, and to this end any delay is avoided. The revenue derived from tourist traffic plays an important part in maintaining the service, and we think the arrangements made for carrying tourists and settlers respectively are reasonable. There is a tendency on one hand for tourists to complain that they are sacrificed to the settlers, and on the other hand for the settlers to complain that they are sacrificed to the tourists. It would be difficult and very expensive to satisfy both.

(8.) *Goods not forwarded in Order in which they are entered for Shipment.*—We could find no proof of this. Wanganui shippers whom we interviewed stated they had never found any difficulty in getting their goods away. If there are delays in forwarding goods it is probably at the Taumarunui end. Some of the settlers, having no knowledge of business, are much in fault themselves. These complain that Messrs. Hatrick and Co. will not forward goods unless the freight is prepaid. We had to point out that they could not expect anything else. Goods may be sent by rail to a consignee care of Hatrick and Co., Taumarunui, without any arrangement being made for paying for carriage from railway-station to wharf, or for freight on the river, and then the consignee complains that his goods are delayed. In this matter the settlers