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## LETTER ON THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS' REPORT

(FROM THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS FOR THE MIDDLE ISLAND TO THE HON. THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS).

*Laid upon the Table by the Hon. Mr. Oliver, with the leave of the House.*

The COMMISSIONER of RAILWAYS, Middle Island, to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS  
Office of the Commissioner of Railways, Middle Island,  
Dunedin, 23rd June, 1880.

SIR,—

In compliance with the permission accorded to me by your telegram of the 21st instant, I have the honor to submit the following observations upon that portion of the report of the Civil Service Commission which is personal to myself or which specially relates to the railways under my charge.

The report of the Civil Service Commission, as presented to the House of Representatives, commences with the admission of having gone exhaustively into none of the subjects of which it treats, and that it is in some respects superficial. Notwithstanding this, the conclusions arrived at and the opinions expressed are very definite, and largely directed against myself, and contain a direct impeachment of my administration as head of the Railway Department of the Middle Island.

It will be for the Government, the House, and the public—among whom I confidently expect to have fair and impartial judges—to decide whether the report is not only confessedly superficial to such an extent as to render it untrustworthy; but, further, whether it is not inaccurate and misleading, and the opinions expressed either the result of foregone conclusions, or otherwise a hastily-formed judgment derived from a superficial insight into matters with which the Commissioners were insufficiently acquainted.

In my reply I shall avoid, as much as possible, commenting upon the opinions expressed by the Commissioners, confining myself principally to the statements put forth as matters of fact, and alleged as instances to prove their charge of my mismanagement.

The report states that the railway service in the South Island is split up into three distinct departments, with such absence of definition as to their respective duties and powers that business is carried on in a constant spirit of antagonism—that whatever organization exists has not been arranged by one directing mind, but is the result of a series of compromises agreed to from time to time as a matter of expediency to prevent open rupture between the different sub-departments. It goes on to state the result of inquiries into the system pursued on the railways in other countries. The Commissioners conclude it to be essential that the principles of railway management adopted elsewhere should not be departed from in this colony, yet they find the first essential principle of having one controlling head over the working of the railway is here entirely ignored, and that to such an extent that the Traffic Manager is precluded from giving orders to engine-drivers.

There are in these statements so much inconsistency and misapprehension that it requires some amount of patience to separate what is correct from what is erroneous; and, in order to enable those not conversant with the working of railways to understand clearly the position taken up by the Civil Service Commissioners, it requires an elementary description of the ordinarily-accepted systems of railway management as established in other countries, and a comparison of such systems with that in operation in this Island.

Throughout Great Britain, Europe, and America, in all the principal railway companies there is a secretary who acts as secretary to the board of directors, and is the principal channel of communication between the shareholders and the directors, as well as between the directors and the working department of the railway. The secretary has nothing whatever to do with the working of the line. The working of the railway is placed entirely and absolutely under one head, who is responsible for the whole of the management, including the working of the traffic, collection of revenue, the use and maintenance of the railway works, plant, and rolling-stock. This chief officer is the general manager. Immediately responsible to him are the traffic manager, locomotive superintendent, and the engineer for permanent-way. Each of these last-named officers takes charge of one of the three distinct branches of the service. The traffic manager has absolute control of the running of the trains and every person connected therewith, not excepting engine-drivers while attached to the trains. He arranges the time-tables, and determines the crossing-places of trains; he attends to all the business of