

for passengers, wool, grain, &c., and also the rates for the same class of goods and passengers on Government lines?—The following is a comparison of rates and fares for sixteen miles:—

				Company.		Government.						
				s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.			
Merchandise, per ton	...	...	...	12	0	...	7	10	to	10	8	
Grain, per ton	...	...	...	5	4	...				4	0	
Minerals, per ton	...	...	...	4	0	...	3	2	to	4	2	
Wool, per bale	...	...	...	1	8	...				1	7	
Timber, per 100ft.	...	...	...	1	4	...				1	2	
Straw and hay, per ton	...	...	...	12	0	...				11	6	
				Ordinary (Single).			Saturdays (Return).					
				First.	Second.		First.	Second.				
				s. d.	s. d.		s. d.	s. d.				
Company	...	...	...	4	0	2	8	...	4	0	2	8
Government	...	...	...	3	4	2	3	...	4	4	2	11

*Thames-Rotorua Valley Line.*

377. *The Chairman.*] Do you know anything of this line?—Very little. I know, unofficially, that it is in course of construction.

378. Do you know anything of the country?—I have been through some of it. I could not give you any information on the subject; I have no official knowledge.

379. You could only speak of the traffic up to Morrinsville?—Only generally as to the traffic on the Auckland lines.

380. What is the name of the officer of the Government who has had to deal with this line?—The Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. Blackett, and Mr. O'Connor, the Under-Secretary for Public Works.

381. *The Chairman.*] Are you aware in what way Mr. Blackett was connected with it?—I presume the plans have to be approved by the Governor in Council, and they would, in the ordinary course, go to him for approval.

382. You know the direction the line is taking?—Yes.

383. Could you give any information as to whether that is the most suitable direction?—There is only the one direction which, I understand, it would reasonably take. There is a saddle to traverse from the low country into Rotorua. There is no other way you could get into it conveniently, I am told.

384. And the junction with Morrinsville a suitable junction?—It is the best available now. At some future date it is proposed to carry on the line down to Taupiri. But it is the best junction now. I was asked whether it was advisable for the Government to purchase these lines—whether they could not be better worked—and there was one point I did not touch on. I think it is very desirable that the Government should have the complete control. It would save an immense amount of difficult negotiations, and do away with troublesome details and questions as to how the expenses shall be charged and the rates and fares divided. It would be very undesirable to have these lines, with rolling-stock in the company's hands, running on to the Government lines. The cost of carrying on the work would be very much increased by the system of accounting which would be necessary owing to the interchange of rolling-stock, which must take place if companies retain their own lines and work them. It would be to the public advantage generally that these lines should be absolutely under the control of the Government. I have no doubt about that.

385. *Mr. Montgomery.*] But you think it would be advantageous that the lines should form part of the general system of the country, and be under one control?—Yes; very much better and simpler.

386. From that point of view only?—Yes.

387. *Sir J. Vogel.*] Have you formed any estimate of what is likely to be the traffic on this line?—No. I have not had anything to do with it. It has never been brought under my notice.

388. Have you any idea of the probable traffic?—None whatever, beyond what general opinions I have formed on the subject, knowing something about the country. From general observation I should say that the line has as fair a prospect of doing as well as most of the Auckland lines.

389. Have you formed any opinion of its value to the existing lines?—It would be a great advantage; it would bring a large increase of revenue to the existing lines, no doubt.

390. Does that remark apply to all these lines?—To a certain extent. The Rakaia-Ashburton Forks line, for instance, has brought an additional traffic to the Government lines which they would not otherwise have got. On the Waimate line there is so little revenue that the remark would hardly apply; but it would apply to the Duntroon-Hakateramea and Waimea lines.

391. *Mr. Montgomery.*] You have said that these branch railways brought traffic to the lines. Do I understand you to say that that traffic would not otherwise have been brought to the Government lines?—I think so; undoubtedly.

392. What kind of traffic is that?—I think business has increased very largely since the line was opened. Such a line of railway as this, which is twenty-three miles in length, must increase the traffic.

393. Is it not a fact that land which was hitherto lying in tussock is now under cultivation?—I am not in a position to say; but I should say that if you cut off the Rakaia-Ashburton Forks Railway from the Government line there would not be so much traffic on the latter.

394. Does not the grain and wool come to the seaports of Canterbury?—Yes; but I doubt