

RAILWAYS RATES AND CHARGES COMMITTEE.

LETTER FROM MR. S. VAILE.

Mr. S. VAILE to the CHAIRMAN, Railways Management Committee.

SIR,—

Wellington, 9th June, 1886.

In compliance with your request I have the honour to submit in writing a description of my proposals for altering the system of levying the fares and rates payable on the New Zealand railways.

1. I propose to abolish computing fares and rates by the mile.
2. To abolish all differential rating.
3. In place of the present system, I propose to reckon all fares and rates by stages in the following manner:—

Starting from any capital town (for this purpose I treat any town having a population of not less than 6,000 as a capital town) I propose to place on every line running out of that town four ticket stations or stages, as near as may be, seven miles apart, and then, should there be a stretch of country of fifty or more miles not having a town of 2,000 inhabitants, to make the stages fifty miles each. Outside each town of 2,000 inhabitants I propose to place one seven-mile stage on each line, and outside towns of 4,000 two seven-mile stages; towns of 6,000, as before stated, to be treated as capital towns.

4. All fares and rates to be of one uniform charge, from stage to stage, for the whole or any portion of the distance.

5. Passenger fares, to be charged 6d. first and 4d. second class for the whole or any portion of a stage.

6. All parcels and goods rates to be reckoned in the same manner—that is, one uniform charge for the whole or any portion of a stage; but, as there are no statistics published on which I could found a reliable estimate, I am unable to fix any scale of rates; those I have previously quoted being, as I have many times said, merely suggestions.

7. From time to time, as the revenue would stand it, the fares and rates from stage to stage to be reduced to the lowest possible limit.

8. When the lines become filled up with seven-mile stages, and the revenue will admit of it, then I propose that the outside seven-mile stage from each capital town shall be removed, then the next stage, and so on until the stages are only between towns of 6,000 or more inhabitants. By persistently following this plan we may ultimately see our way, as regards passengers, at any rate, to making one fare only for any distance within the colony.

Memorandum.—I do not propose to fix the stages arbitrarily at the distances mentioned, but at the best collecting and distributing points nearest to them.

9. That the Government should be relieved of their present responsibility as carriers.

10. That an insurance department should be established in connection with the Railway Department, where, by payment of a small fee, either life, limb, or goods could be insured.

11. That, in place of the present tickets, railway-stamps should be issued and sold by every licensed stamp-vendor.

12. That stamps of a different colour or description should be issued which would entitle the holder to pass from a station immediately preceding a ticket-station to the next station beyond it, and thus save him from paying a double fare for a very short journey. The same will apply to goods traffic.

From the adoption of the proposed plan I should expect the following results to take place:—

1. The rapid settlement of the country;
2. The creation of numerous inland towns;
3. The doing away with the great evil of massing large numbers of people in a few centres;
4. A more even distribution of population and wealth;
5. A more equitable adjustment of the burden of taxation;
6. A very large increase in the railway revenue.

I am, Sir,

Very faithfully yours,
SAMUEL VAILE.

E. Mitchelson, Esq., M.H.R.,
Chairman, Railways Rates and Charges Committee.