

through express trains in both Islands without any unnecessary delay either at Wellington or Lyttelton.

(4.) That, to make this possible, it will be necessary that the connecting steamers should, except in extremely bad weather, be capable of running from Wellington to Lyttelton, or the reverse, in eleven or, at the most, twelve hours.

(5.) That, in order to accomplish this with reasonable regularity, the steamers to be provided should be of about 2,000 tons burden, fitted with twin-screws.

(6.) That the cost of suitable vessels for the service may be estimated at from £60,000 to £70,000 each, delivered at Wellington.

The Committee direct attention to the fact, as one which greatly affects the safety and comfort of the passengers, that nearly all the principal railway companies of Great Britain have discarded steamers with one screw, or paddles, in favour of steamers with twin-screws, for the services connecting their railways with those of the Continent.

The Committee are of opinion that the moderate acceleration of the trains that will be needed to give effect to the above proposals should prove acceptable to the public, and will attract to the railways a considerable additional traffic.

The Committee recommend the Government in the meantime to invite tenders for the performance of a daily steam-service between Wellington and Lyttelton each way, and are of opinion that any direct loss involved in maintaining it would be recouped by the increase in the passenger traffic between the two ports, by increased railway revenue, and by the saving to be effected by dispensing with the numerous special trains at present run for the purpose of distributing the San Francisco and other ocean mails.

2nd September, 1898.

EDWARD G. WRIGHT,
Chairman of the Committee.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, 19TH JULY, 1898.—(Mr. E. G. WRIGHT, Chairman.)

Mr. T. RONAYNE sworn and examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] You are General Manager of the New Zealand Railways?—Yes, that is my designation.

2. You are aware of the purpose for which this Committee has been set up?—Yes, I am fully aware of the purpose.

3. Have you considered the advisability of running a service of fast steamers to connect the South and North Island railways?—Yes; the department has considered the advisability of running such a service, and it has been brought under the notice of the Minister for Railways. I have made suggestions in that direction; not quite recently.

4. Would you state to the Committee what your views on the subject are?—I have taken out some information with regard to the subject, of which I have some notes here which I think will meet the case. The memorandum which I have made will show how the train-services would be affected by such a service. Under existing arrangements mails and passengers from Invercargill for north of Oamaru leave Invercargill by train at 4.15 p.m. daily, Saturdays excepted. I may mention that that is a mixed train, and the journey is a very dreary one. The train arrives at Clinton at 9.5 p.m. Passengers have to remain there all night. The train leaves again next morning at 6.5 a.m., and arrives at Dunedin at 10.50 a.m., catching the northern express for Christchurch. You leave Dunedin at 11 a.m., and arrive at Christchurch at 9 p.m., and you arrive at Lyttelton at 9.48 p.m. On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays you there connect with the steamer for Wellington, reaching the latter place at about 11 a.m. on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays. As a matter of fact, that is only done when the best boats are running. Thus passengers and mails from the Southland district can leave Invercargill at 4.20 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and be in Wellington at 11 a.m. on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays, the journey time being, approximately, forty-three hours, including a nine-hours stoppage at Clinton. Going South, mails and passengers for stations south of Mosgiel can leave Wellington at from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., connecting with southern express at Christchurch on the following morning, and arrive at Dunedin at 9 p.m., remain all night, take express next day, arriving at Invercargill at 3.30 p.m., connecting with trains for Riverton, Orepuki, Kingston, and Bluff the same night. Within the last six months we have put on a fast service between Dunedin and Invercargill, which has been a great improvement on the old mixed train, which was slow, and had to call at nearly every station.

5. It would be as well now to state the effect of that improved service?—The effect as regards traffic has been most encouraging. It was prophesied that it would be bad for the traffic, and