

as those which now run between England and France and England and Ireland—twenty-knot boats, or perhaps not quite so fast would suit.

12. Has not general experience shown that improved facilities for travelling have increased the number of travellers?—Yes; I think the greater facilities given to the public the more advantage will be taken of them. That is my experience.

13. Has your department made any inquiries as to the cost of steamers such as would be required to carry out the service indicated?—The department has not made any specific inquiries such as we should do if we contemplated such a service; but I may say I have been given to understand that a suitable steamer would cost about £60,000—that is to say, a steamer of about eighteen knots.

14. Carrying how many passengers?—I have not ascertained particulars as to a steamer which would be fully equal to the requirements of the service. I would ask the Committee not to attach too much importance to my evidence on this point, because I am not in a position to speak definitely on it. I am merely speaking from hearsay.

15. Have you any view as to what her tonnage should be?—No. My evidence on such points is of no value.

16. *Mr. Buchanan.*] In holiday times especially, seeing the long time it takes to travel, say, between Auckland and the various points in the South Island as described by you and *vice versa*, do you not think that the number of passengers by the railways would be very much increased if the time were cut shorter?—That is, the journey between Wellington and New Plymouth?

17. Yes; and the connections right through the south?—I understand; I do not think that the business would be very largely increased by the alteration, but it would be a great public convenience.

18. Do you not think that the number of people who would travel in holiday time would be greatly increased?—Yes; I think if you could shorten the railway time between Wellington and New Plymouth you would get an increased number of passengers. There is no doubt the journey is a most laborious one, and even a strong person feels pretty stale at the end of it.

19. Then, as to the average number of passengers on the through trains which you have given us. I suppose it would really mean that you would lose a number of passengers if you were to drop out some of the present calling-stations?—You would lose a certain number, but it would be a difficult matter to cut out many of the stopping-stations. You speak, I presume, of increasing the speed of the trains between Palmerston North and New Plymouth. I would point out that that would be a matter of great difficulty on account of the nature of the line. There are so many sharp curves and heavy grades that it would be very difficult to run trains at any greater speed. If the Government were to take over the Manawatu line there might perhaps be a saving made in time of an hour and a half in all between Wellington and New Plymouth; that is to say, by making the train a slight as possible—not taking horse-boxes, dairy produce, or goods of any kind.

20. And what about the Napier line?—Yes; you could improve that immensely, too; much more so than the other service.

21. When the express was first started between Christchurch and Dunedin had you not a much smaller number of calling-stations than at present?—Yes; we had considerably less; but as time went on pressure was brought to bear on the department which it could not resist. Every person who had any stake in the country, or held strong views on certain subjects, wanted the express train to stop at his station, and brought pressure to bear to have his wishes carried out. The department resisted as long as possible, but it was useless.

22. You spoke of a night train between Invercargill and Dunedin; would it not be necessary to have sleeping-accommodation on that train?—That would have to be done; but it would not pay in the present state of our business. It would be a purely through service, and we could not do the same intermediate business as we do now. The train-service is very much supported by the stations on the way. Through passengers by themselves would not pay.

23. *Mr. Duthie.*] You seem to attach some importance to the quick through train between Invercargill and Dunedin; could it not be arranged that the train from Invercargill should reach Dunedin the same night? It is a seven-hours service, I believe, and then you waste some time in Dunedin?—The 4.15 p.m. train is a mixed one, and would not do the journey right through to Dunedin under, at least, ten hours. There is one fast service; two could not possibly pay.

24. Invercargill is the starting-point of the whole northern express service, and for the matter of a few people who come in by the branch lines the whole of that service is thrown out?—It is not so much a matter of through passengers as of the mails.

25. It is a seven-hours service, and if the train left Invercargill at 2 o'clock it would arrive at Dunedin at 9 o'clock, and the service would not be broken to any extent. It would enable your trains to arrive from the different points in Southland in the morning so as to connect with the express at Invercargill, where they would have an hour or two's rest, and time for their dinner, and a spell?—Yes.

26. Could you not do anything to facilitate the service farther north?—Not unless you eliminate some of the stoppages. There is the shunting at Oamaru, which is a very awkward station to work. I have recommended the Minister for Railways to provide funds for removing the site of that station, so that, instead of having to reverse all trains, they could run straight on. Time might also be saved by putting on dining-cars, but between Oamaru and Dunedin it is very bad country to climb, and in many cases the putting-on of a dining-car would necessitate a second engine.

27. Are your engines so pressed that they could not draw an additional dining-car?—That is a very bad part of the country to run trains over. You might, perhaps, save half an hour by running a dining-car and cutting out a number of stops.

28. The Manawatu Company drag a dining-car over the whole of the hills on their line every night?—Yes; but they make a mistake in doing so. They ought to drop it at Paikakariki.