

PAPERS RELATING TO

Now that we are commencing the construction of railways in New Zealand, we should resolve to construct them upon a basis not dissimilar to that adopted in this country; that is to say, we should lay down as rules (1.) That railway lines shall be constructed on precisely that scale which is suited to meet the probable present traffic demands of the parts of the country in which the lines are to be constructed; and (2.) That the people of the Colony will be sufficiently intelligent to protect themselves against accidents without continuous fencing of the lines, or the necessity for costly crossings where the street lines or roads are intersected.

If I recollect rightly, on the Otago Southern Trunk Railway, from Dunedin to the Clutha, there is intended to be, even yet, some heavy expenditure, for the sake of avoiding level crossings; and that where such crossings are contemplated, it is proposed to go to the expense of constructing gates and paying gate-keepers. This appears to me to be an imitation of the English system, without the excuse for it which is afforded by difficulties existing in England. For example, in passing a railway bill through Parliament, enormous expense has generally to be incurred, and concessions in the direction of what is supposed to be for the protection of the public are readily granted, rather than that there should be discussion. In fact, costly road crossings are constantly adopted for fear that some individuals might raise more costly objections, that the lines proposed would be hindrances to traffic. Again, railways in England are mostly constructed for rapid traffic; whereas in New Zealand, as in America, I anticipate that the average rate of speed will not very much, if at all, exceed twenty miles an hour, and that there the same care can be exercised in driving trains as is exercised here; constantly, where curves are sharp, or gradients steep, or roads or streets have to be crossed, there are small boards stuck up with figures indicating the speed at which the trains are to pass.

If it be decided, as I think it should be, that people in New Zealand are to be familiarised with railways, and that they are quite as capable as any other people of protecting themselves against accidents from passing trains, it seems to me that costly crossings may be avoided. We may also follow the example of America in having the most simple style of stations; and, further, we may decide that where great difficulties exist in crossing any river, or approaching any town, there, for a time at least, until the traffic warrants the incurring of heavy expenditure, such expedients shall be resorted to as, while not entailing a large amount of inconvenience, will save a very considerable amount of expense.

I have, &c.,
JULIUS VOGEL.

No. 2.

The Hon. W. GISBORNE to the Hon. J. VOGEL.

Colonial Secretary's Office,
7th June, 1871.

SIR,—

I do myself the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated from New York on 7th March last, in which you submit some suggestions for the guidance of the Government—the result of your observation of the railroad system adopted in America.

In thanking you for this valuable letter which the Government have read with much interest, I take the opportunity of stating that copies have been sent to the Superintendents of the Provinces, and the Chairman of the County Council of Westland, for the information of their respective Governments.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. Julius Vogel.

W. GISBORNE.

No. 3.

MEMORANDUM by Dr. HECTOR.

24th April, 1871.

I QUITE agree that level crossings might be safely adopted without gate keepers in most cases. Mr. Blair, of Otago, has suggested to me a very ingenious method of closing the break in single fencing lines of properties which is made by the passage of a railway. The gap is occupied by a pit that is bridged over by beams carrying the rails. I would advise that he be requested to communicate a working plan of this to the department for distribution to the other engineers. It is particularly adapted to Canterbury.

Mr. Vogel's suggestion that the station arrangements should be of the most inexpensive character, is deserving of great attention. In the case of Government lines, the collection of fares, except on short lines, should be effected by the conductors, or stamped tickets could be sold in any shop at per mile.

Any station arrangements beyond a landing stage might be erected by and at the expense of the local community, such as goods sheds, waiting rooms, refreshment rooms, &c. These should hardly be general charges against a Government line.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works.

J. HECTOR.

No. 4.

MR. BLACKETT to MR. KNOWLES.

(Telegram).

SIR,—

Dr. Hector's memorandum on Mr. Blair's suggested fence. Mr. Blair does not suggest it as new; it is in use on the Invercargill line where I examined it. We are adopting it in places on the

Dunedin, 28th April, 1871.