

including wharf and delivery. Local traffic, that is, goods from the country to be delivered in Dunedin, are not included in the contract. We are informed that this contract was made as an experiment two years ago, and will shortly require to be renewed. We are strongly of opinion that it is desirable to adopt the system of delivery by a carting contract at all large stations; and to apply it to all goods received for delivery, but that the delivery charge should be separate from the railway charge, and it should be open to any consignee to cart his own goods.

46. Intimately connected with this subject is that of storage. The practice Storage. throughout the colony is very diverse; in Otago, where very small storage accommodation has been provided, and it is of the utmost importance to clear the goods shed with rapidity, the rule is to allow free storage for twelve working hours only, and to charge 2s. a day per ton for goods left in the store after that time. In the case of Dunedin, where there is a delivery contract, the goods are sent to the consignee without notice—he has previous notice of the arrival and discharge of his goods from the ship. In Christchurch, where no carting contract exists, free storage is allowed for twelve working hours; and the charge is only 2s. a week for goods not taken away. At country stations, in the case of grain and other produce, free storage is allowed for one week. We have personal experience of the inconvenience to the public of this system. When we inspected the bonded goods store, it was, notwithstanding its magnitude, choked with goods, and the Customs had given notice that the discharge of ships at Lyttelton was stopped until the goods shed was sufficiently clear to receive the goods. At Dunedin, on the other hand, with four ships and three steamers discharging, the bonded goods shed was comparatively clear.

47. We are of opinion that the Otago rates for storage are not too high. They Rates of storage. are, and are intended to be, prohibitive; and we are satisfied that in no other way can the full facilities of railway traffic be afforded to the public with equal fairness to all parties. It is no part of the business of the railway to relieve persons from the necessary cost of providing for the storage of goods in which they deal, or to afford more accommodation than is required for carrying on its business as a carrier; and if the railway sheds are allowed to be used for purposes of private storage, either enormous expense must be incurred, from which no corresponding profit will be derived, or some part of the public must be inconvenienced in their use of the railway for the benefit of others. We therefore recommend that the storage allowed should be confined to twelve working hours, and that 2s. a day per ton should be charged for storage beyond that time.

48. As a part of the same subject, is that of clearing goods by the Customs clearance. Custom House in the bonded sheds. In Christchurch, formerly the railway found the labour for handling the goods for Custom House examination, and charged the consignees 1s. a ton. This plan was abandoned in consequence of complaints that the charge operated very unequally, and the system now in force is the same as at Dunedin—namely, that the consignees have to provide their own labour for handling the goods. With the present allowance for free storage and the low charge, the consignee has no interest in expediting the clearance of his goods, and the sheds are therefore choked. In Dunedin no difficulty is experienced, because the high rate of storage compels the consignee to clear his goods out of the sheds as rapidly as possible. We therefore recommend that consignees be required to find their own labour for assisting to clear goods at the Custom House.

49. In case of goods delivered to the contracting carter, the receipt of the Carter's receipt. carter is taken as sufficient, but he is held under sufficient bonds to cover any claim which might be made against the railway by the consignee. In addition to this, he takes a receipt in duplicate from the consignee, and delivers one to the railway.

50. Overcharges should be at once refunded out of current revenue. In the Overcharges. Northern system, they are paid by the Manager out of his imprest moneys, and are charged as refunds of revenue. But as money paid in excess of the legal dues is not, under the Public Revenues Act, the property of the Crown or of the nature of public moneys, they are not payable into the Public Account, and when so paid serve to swell the apparent revenues to a fictitious amount. We therefore think the overcharges