

Mr. Carruthers.

4th Sept., 1877.

301. For instance, tenders for the supply of stores, or tenders for the cartage and delivery of goods and parcels, does that come before you, or would come before you, for your recommendation before it went to the Minister?—You have taken two things together.

302. Well, take the stores first?—Yes, all contracts have to go to the Minister, and they go through me.

303. And you minute them?—Yes, and make recommendations.

304. And that holds good with reference to the other matters?—Yes.

305. Would you decide which is the lowest tender?—No; it was only the other day that a cage arose, and it was sent to Mr. Conyers to give an opinion which was the lowest tender, and the matter was decided in accordance with his opinion.

306. Only upon the question which was the lowest tender?—The question of fact was remitted to him.

307. Supposing he had advised that even the lowest tender should not be accepted, what course would then have been taken?—In that case, the matter would have gone to the Minister with my recommendation upon it, as well as Mr. Conyers'.

308. What is the position of affairs in the North Island?—The Managers of the various lines have no superior officer between themselves and me. They communicate direct with me. That is only since Mr. Passmore has left the service, as he has not been replaced.

309. Do you think the railways are being satisfactorily conducted in the absence of Mr. Passmore?—I think it would be very much better if an officer was engaged to take his place.

310. Do you think he should be a professional engineer, or a business man who has a knowledge of railway management?—I think he should be a professional man. A business man would be of no use whatever. A business man would simply take the place which a Minister takes. The Minister, I presume, is supposed not to be a professional man, but a business man.

311. You would recommend that a civil engineer should manage the railways?—A civil engineer or a mechanical engineer.

312. I wish to ask you about another thing. Do you think it is desirable that steel rails should replace iron rails on the curves; would it not give greater security?—It would not add to the security, but it might be economical; but even then it depends upon the traffic. Where there is a large traffic they are more economical; where there is but a small traffic they are not. The Government have taken the opinion of a consulting engineer in England on the subject of steel and iron rails. He is entirely in favour of iron, but I do not agree in all that he says. I think where the traffic is heavy steel rails may be used with advantage, if the Government is in a position to pay the increased cost.

313. Mr. Macandrew.] What is the difference in price between the two kinds of rails?—It varies very much. The present difference in price is very small—about 30 per cent. I think.

314. Would not the difference in weight equalize the difference in price?—No; you cannot reduce the weight in the case of light rails. You could not use a steel rail of less weight than a 52-lb. rail with advantage; it would not be safe to have a 40-lb. steel rail.

315. The Chairman.] Is it not a uniform practice to use steel rails because they are lighter than iron?—It is sometimes, where such rails as 80-lb. rails are being used; but you could not put in a 32-lb. steel rail for a 40-lb. iron rail.

316. I will just read you an extract from the report of the Commissioner of Railways in Queensland. He says, "The renewal of rails, fastenings, and sleepers is also an expensive item of maintenance, and the adoption of steel rails on all curves would tend much to economy in this respect. The steel rails on the range land some years ago prove this incontestably." Your answer is not in accord with that?—No.

317. What is the cost of those of our engines which have been manufactured in England?—From £800 to £3,000.

318. How will they compare with the engines in use on the Great Northern line in England?—In what respect?

319. As to cost and power?—Our heaviest engines are much lighter than their heaviest engines; still they are very heavy and powerful engines.

320. How do they compare in respect of sort?—There is little if any relative difference. Our engines were contracted for in England, and we had to pay the same as an English company would have had to pay for the same engines.

321. Hon. Mr. Ormond.] Mr. Brown was asking you in reference to the management of the railways. There was one point that did not come out. You said that the Managers on the North Island lines had complete charge. What I want to ask you now is, does that apply to the charge of the locomotives and permanent way, or is that part of it under some other officer?—It was under the engineering staff.

322. The Superintending Engineers for constructed lines have now the charge of that part?—Yes.

323. Do I understand you are of opinion that, with regard to the local Managers, it would be better to have an officer to superintend them than to have an officer to superintend the traffic only?—I think it would be better to have a higher officer over them.

324. There is a question with reference to a point which Mr. Brown also examined you upon, in reference to the position of the Superintending Engineer with regard to the approval of the Minister. The two questions which Mr. Brown asked you about were as to requiring the approval for tenders for stores?—For contracts for stores.

325. It does not apply to stores that are wanted?—No; the Superintending Engineer or local Manager would purchase any stores required which were not to be paid out of loan.

326. When a yearly tender is to be called for, the practice is for the Superintending Engineer to send the tender up, with his recommendation on it, for approval?—Yes.

327. It comes to you?—Yes.

328. And what is done with it?—I would make a recommendation in addition to that of the Superintending Engineer.