

*Mr. Conyers.* was owing to several causes, among others the want of trucks, break of gauge, and the grain not being taken away as quickly as it was brought in. Was there any blame attachable to the Manager?—The Manager did the best he could under the circumstances.

459. *Mr. Macandrew.*] What has been or what could be done with the vast quantity of old railway iron that has accumulated?—Nothing has up to the present been done. Much of it could be converted into wheels and axles in Port Chalmers. Everything necessary in connection with railway rolling-stock could be made there.

460. Would a saving be effected to the colony by establishing the shop you speak of?—I should recommend the establishment of such a place. I estimate, however, that forging could be done there at the rate of £10 a ton, and we now pay £16 or £18 for the same in getting it from the Home country. Even if it cost the same money it would be a great benefit to the country.

461. *The Chairman.*] Have you suggested this to the head of the Railway Department?—Not yet. I intend making these suggestions to the head of my department. We could make all the wheels and axles necessary for the whole of the colony at Port Chalmers, for the engines, carriages, and wagons.

462. The hammers and furnaces have been specially put up to repair any damage to steamers. To enable us to have the railway material made there we must keep proper forge-men?—I look after the machinery used in pumping out the docks, and also a very expensive and first-class plant that has been erected there capable of doing any kind of repair to marine engines and boilers. The large steam-hammer was necessary in case of broken shafts. It is a very heavy one. There is none other in New Zealand like it. A forge-man must be retained in case of a steamer arriving broken down.

463. *Mr. Macandrew.*] Instructions have been issued relative to ascertaining the cost of some eight or ten carriages. Do you remember what the cost was?—The price of Findlay's carriages, including wheels, is £386 4s. 7d. These are the carriages on the Port Chalmers line, and are exactly the same price as the ones imported from Home. The work on these colonial carriages is excellent, and fully equal to English workmanship.

464. You consider these carriages quite equal to the imported ones?—Yes; the small details in the workmanship are better than in the imported carriages.

465. And they can be obtained at the same cost as those sent from England?—Yes.

466. *Mr. Reader Wood.*] What timber was used in the colonial carriages?—Jarrah and cedar.

467. *Mr. Macandrew.*] Then, in point of fact, carriages can be manufactured in the colony at as low a rate as the carriages imported?—Yes; if the manufacturer is allowed the benefit of freight, charges, and insurance.

468. What price does Findlay charge for a single carriage?—£386.

469. What quantity could Findlay produce in a given time?—He could turn them out very quickly—as fast as they would be required.

470. Do you think if tenders were advertised that there would be any difficulty in obtaining them within a reasonable time in the colony?—No difficulty whatever. The only delay hitherto has been about the wheels and axles, and now we can make them ourselves.

471. *Mr. Reader Wood.*] Do you think if you had full power of dismissing men and officers, and had in your own hands the sole management and control of the lines, and the Government paid you a small fixed salary and commission on the earnings, that you could so arrange that the line could be made to pay better than it does now?—With regard to the power of dismissal, and the taking on of men, I think it would be much better that I should have that power. I had that power on the Otago Railways, and I do not think it was ever abused or caused dissatisfaction. The fact of the men knowing I had such power kept them in thorough order. With respect to working the lines, I should have no objection to taking a small fixed salary and a share in the profits. I have no doubt that there would be a considerable increase in the net receipts. In that case I would have the regulating of the tariff. There would be no objection to submitting the tariff of rates to the Government for approval or otherwise.

372. Do you think the lines could be leased advantageously?—We have already tried one line at Bluff Harbour. The only serious objection to leasing a line is that it is likely to fall out of repair, and be in a bad condition when handed over to the Government.

473. By obtaining proper securities from the lessee that the lines would be kept in good repair, would not that do away with your objection?—Yes; one of the small lines might be tried first. I have no doubt by the Government leasing the Dunedin and Canterbury lines they would obtain a very good rate.

474. I believe it would be a saving to the Government in the Department of Public Works by leasing the railways. All that would then be required would be a Superintending Engineer, and thus we would get rid of all the departmental expense at present surrounding our railway system?—Many lines in England are leased from one company to another.

475. What is the objection to the sale of railway tickets in shops?—The objection is that we lose a check of the tickets. All the tickets are numbered consecutively. When they are issued to the clerk he is personally responsible for them. Every morning his book is balanced against the tickets unsold, so by having tickets sold at shops the consecutive numbers would be broken. If the shopkeepers purchased from the ticket-seller and paid for them at once, there would be no serious objection.

476. *Mr. Macandrew.*] I presume you mean having them sold as postage stamps, allowing a small percentage, making it a profit to the purchaser?—Yes; the tickets would be only sold for cash.

477. *Mr. Reader Wood.*] The Government would also gain an advantage on account of tickets that would be lost.

478. *The Chairman.*] If a man buys £10 worth of tickets it really does not matter whether he uses them or not. He can do with them what he likes.

479. *Mr. Conyers.*] I have no objection as long as the tickets are in the first instance obtained from the office.

480. *Mr. Macandrew.*] The only thing perhaps would be the risk of forgery.