

Mr. Conyers.
21st Aug., 1877.

563. Have you considered the matter with regard to the cost or the class of article?—Both; more particularly with regard to cost.

564. Now, with regard to wagons; what parts of the wagons are imported?—The whole of the ironwork.

565. What is the practice with regard to the construction of these?—Tenders are called for the ironwork at Home, and the timberwork is contracted for here.

566. If these wagons were let out by tender here, what part would the contractor import?—The wheels, axles, and springs, and probably the buffers.

567. What would the proportion of the importations be?—About a fifth or sixth of the value when completed.

568. What would the rest of the wagon be?—Ironwork for the body, bolts, small nuts, iron plates, coupling chains, nails, &c., and timber. Of course I am speaking of things as they are. The Government might supply them with wheels and axles, which would lessen the proportion.

569. Do you think the Government can manufacture these things better than private firms can?—Yes; we have better appliances at Port Chalmers—that is, the Government establishment. I may say I have asked the Engineer-in-Chief for permission to make one hundred buffers at Port Chalmers from scrap-iron, as an experiment, and he has agreed to it.

570. Who are Sparrow and Co.; a large firm in Dunedin?—Yes.

571. Are you aware of that firm having made offers to construct wagons at Dunedin?—No.

572. Now, with regard to carriages, what parts of those would have to be imported?—Similar parts.

573. Would New Zealand timber be suitable?—We have used cedar hitherto; Australian wood for the coach.

574. Are our woods suitable?—Our chief difficulty has been to get seasoned timber. If properly seasoned we have woods that will suit admirably.

575. *Mr. Larnach.*] If it were made worth while for a large firm to go into the work, would not the difficulty disappear?—Yes; I believe it is a question of capital to get timber seasoned.

576. What is the class of timber required?—Close-grained.

577. And New Zealand wood is suitable?—Yes; I think kauri, rata, and some kind of birch would do very well. Some of these are very dense close woods.

578. With reference to powers of Managers, will you tell us what are their powers in reference to employes?—I have power to take on or to put off labourers as I please; with regard to officers, I can suspend them.

579. *The Chairman.*] Can you change a Stationmaster from one place to another?—Not without authority from the Engineer-in-Chief.

580. And it would take some time to get that?—Yes.

581. *Hon. Mr. Ormond.*] But suppose anything happened to a Stationmaster, so that he could not continue in his place?—In that case I would put some one on, and simply say I had done so.

582. That is the practice. I suppose you would only refer to the Engineer-in-Chief in case of your desiring to carry out fresh plans?—My instructions are that, if I wish to remove an officer from one place to another, I must write to the Engineer-in-Chief for authority to do so.

583. *Mr. Larnach.*] Have you a special telegraph office at each station?—No.

584. Supposing a man were not giving satisfaction, what would you do?—In that case I would take it upon myself to remove him, and then report that I had done so.

585. *Hon. Mr. Ormond.*] Are you aware that cases have arisen in which there have been complaints of unfair removals by Managers?—I have heard of such a case in Canterbury.

586. Does not the present system amount to nothing more than this, that you have to refer your actions to the Minister for approval?—I submit my plans for approval to the Minister through the Engineer-in-Chief.

587. To what extent could the Kaitangata coal be utilized on the Otago railways?—The engine in use on that line is at present burning the coal, and it is gradually coming into use in Dunedin and the Clutha; but I do not think it could be generally used on the lines without some alterations in the engines.

588. If it could be utilized it would effect a great saving?—Yes; but I should think more would be consumed in order to bring out the same results as Newcastle—that is to say, I should think a ton of Newcastle is equal to two tons of Kaitangata.

589. The quantity at the mine is unlimited?—Yes.

590. Do you know anything of the extent of the business done on the line itself?—I cannot say what it does.

591. Are you aware that the Company is endeavouring to get the Government to take the line over?—Yes.

592. Is the coal used generally in the district?—It is in Tuapeka, Balclutha, and Dunedin.

593. Can you explain then why, if the coal is of good quality, there is not a sufficient sale to make the line pay?—Well, in Dunedin it has had to compete with Green Island coal.

594. What sort of coal is that?—It is a brown coal.

595. Is that a better coal for steam purposes?—It is better for steam purposes—that is, it is better for stationary boilers. The Kaitangata coal is very light, but superior in appearance. The brown coal has the advantage of being nearer Dunedin, and is brought to market at a less cost for carriage.

596. Can you look forward to New Zealand coal being used on the railways?—I believe if the engines were made specially for it I think it could be done. The fire-boxes are at present too small. The grates are too limited in area to give the coal a fair trial. The modifications could easily be made when new engines are built.

597. Have you any knowledge of the Malvern coal?—No.

598. Of the Shag Point coal?—That, I think, is the best we have. If any will succeed that will—that is, leaving out of consideration the West Coast coal.