

Mr. Congers.
21st Aug., 1877.

and Ashley District, in which complaint is made as to charges levied for carrying stock two miles by rail. Do you not think the charges could be reduced so as to meet that case?—I should think people would as soon drive stock a couple of miles as go to the trouble of loading and unloading.

629. But there is an impassable river in the way?—Then in that case a special rate would be required. We charge the same for ten miles as for one, because the trouble is just the same, and the trucks are occupied for a considerable time in loading and unloading.

630. Will you see to this matter then?—Yes.

631. With regard to weekly accounts that have been adopted, is one effect of it to deprive workmen of a day's pay in the year? Do they now get paid for 364 days in the year instead of for 365?—I cannot see that. They are paid every four weeks for the number of days they work from Monday morning till Saturday night.

632. Has there been any alteration in the system of payments during the last month or the last week?—Yes; the retention money has been abolished. The men are now paid their wages one week after they are due. Pay is not stopped at all now.

633. With regard to persons who send horses on the train—say a distance which would cost twenty shillings—the owner makes a requisition for a horse-box, and for the first horse pays twenty shillings. If another horse is put into the box, the owner is charged for the whole box?—If a second person put the second horse in, he would have to pay; but if the owner of the first horse put in another he would not be called upon to pay.

634. Then four or five persons might have to pay for the box over and over again?—A horse-box only carries two.

635. I have seen four or five?—Not in a horse-box proper. It must have been in cattle-trucks. In the horse-box there is accommodation for the groom and other conveniences. If a man puts two horses in the box, he is charged half-price for the second; but if the second horse is put in by a different person, surely there can be no objection to his paying the full price. We charge both the full price. There are two accounts, and the trouble is double.

636. Do you think the old rates for stock on the Canterbury lines were losing rates?—I had no experience of them, but they were certainly very low; but I have proposed a reduction on the existing rates, which will make them a shade higher than they were before.

637. You think a reduction necessary?—Yes; the existing rates are too high, and the matter has been gone into and several changes made.

638. Have any steps been taken to increase the capacity of the wood-trucks?—Yes, I have given instructions for them to be made so that they will carry five tons.

639. There is another thing I wish to ask, whether there should not be at the principal railway stations porters to take passengers' luggage to and from the railway platforms?—The porters should do that work, and I have given instructions to that effect in Dunedin.

640. Is it done at Lyttelton and Christchurch?—I think not, but I will see that it is done.

641. Mr. Larnach.] There is a single line between Port Chalmers and Dunedin. Is that sufficient for the work that has to be done?—Yes; we have a long loop where trains pass each other.

642. There is no inconvenient crowding?—No, but I would strongly recommend that the line be straightened.

643. It would be more economically worked if it were straightened?—Yes, in every respect—in regard to time and the cost of maintaining the line, and the rolling stock would be much less.

644. You think that for some years to come a single line will be sufficient?—Yes, if properly managed by the introduction of the block system, which we propose to introduce at once.

645. You are aware that, notwithstanding the reduction in the tariff, there is still a considerable amount of freight carried by the lighters to Dunedin?—Yes; but the rates were amended again yesterday, and I think they will catch the traffic now.

646. Is there a uniform used generally by the employés on the railways?—In Otago.

647. Nowhere else?—No.

648. Would you recommend one uniform to be used throughout the colony?—Yes, I am strongly in favour of it.

THURSDAY, 23rd AUGUST, 1877.

Mr. J. E. FITZGERALD examined.

Mr. FitzGerald.
23rd Aug., 1877.

649. [The Chairman.] We have called you, Mr. FitzGerald, with a view of ascertaining something about the system of audit now in operation in regard to railways. Will you be good enough to explain to the Committee generally the system now at work?—The railway business may be said to be divided into two branches—the passenger traffic and the goods traffic. With regard to the former, we keep an account of all tickets created, and the Chief Storekeeper is debited with the whole. They are sent by him to the local Storekeepers, who are then debited with them; from the local Storekeepers they are sent to the Stationmasters, who then are debited with the tickets sent to them, and these officers make a daily return to the Manager of the line of the tickets they have disposed of, and also a weekly return, which the Manager forwards to the Audit Office in support of his summary of traffic. Thus we know the number of tickets that have been disposed of, the price at which they have been sold, and are able to check them by the cash payments into the bank. With regard to the goods traffic, the Stationmasters make out abstracts of the goods received into and sent from each station. These abstracts go to the Managers. The Stationmasters also make out from the abstracts a weekly summary of all goods received and sent, and the Manager makes out a general summary of all the goods sent and received to and from every station during the week, which, if the accounts of the Stationmasters are correct, must balance, because all goods sent from one station must be received at another, and consequently the general balanced summary of goods is complete. A