

possible. It was understood that each member of the Commission should have a copy of them for revision. For my own part, I did not get a copy, and I first saw them in a printed form.

878. *The Chairman.*] In this form (pointing to a book of rules)?—Yes; that was the first shape in which I saw them, and then they had been issued. They came immediately after they were printed.

Mr. Lawson.
29th Aug., 1877.

879. Did you make any objections to the Government respecting them?—No, I did not.

880. Do you consider these rules are really practical?—The majority of them are. There are a few things, of course, which might be improved. For instance, the gatekeeper is supposed to be on duty day and night. With a few qualifications such as that there would be really nothing highly objectionable in the rules. There is one about facing-points that we had some bother about, and that was set right. They are workable now, so far as I know. There was another serious objection in one rule which required that the guards of railways should stand by their brakes. The Stationmaster, or person in charge, was supposed to hold the facing-points whilst the train passed, but at many of these places the facing-points were not within three or four miles of a station. When they came to these places the engine-drivers would stop the trains and begin whistling for somebody.

881. How did you like that rule?—We had to alter it. It is quite sufficient if the points are locked and pinned.

882. Was that alteration made by the authority of the Chief Engineer?—No; I took it upon myself to do it, because it was a matter of urgency, and I got the sanction of Mr. Conyers immediately.

883. With regard to the rule that necessitated the guard being at his brake always, what was the effect of that. Did it cause any increase in the number of guards?—It caused the ticket-sellers to be put on.

884. Do you think that was necessary?—No; it was not.

885. What amount of expense was incurred by the appointment of those persons?—It cost about £3,000 a year in Canterbury.

886. Did you make any representations to the Superintending Engineer?—I did verbally, but I received instructions simply.

887. The extra hands have been dismissed since?—Yes; they have.

888. Was that the first step taken to remedy the matter?—I think the Superintending Engineer made some representations to Wellington, but I know nothing further. So far as my district is concerned they were dismissed immediately on the receipt of my instructions to dismiss them, with the understanding that they were to receive the authorized pay in lieu of notice.

889. You received no other instructions, except absolutely to dismiss them?—No other.

890. I want to ask you about the railway tariff. Will you state whether, in your opinion, during the last month, the railways have been used by the public as much or more than they were in the corresponding month of the year previous?—Are you speaking generally of the traffic?

891. Well, give us your opinion as to the passenger traffic first?—I am sorry I am not quite satisfied with the figures I have got, which were put into my hands by the accountant just before I left. If you wish I will give it you. I expect shortly to have returns and figures.

892. Can you give some certain information?—In July, 1875. Would it be necessary to go back so far?

893. *The Chairman.*] Yes; I will take the answer.—In July, 1875, we carried 45,290 passengers, and we then had 170 miles of railway open. In July, 1876, we carried 53,857 passengers, with a mileage of 255 miles. In July, 1877—and this is the part I am in doubt about—we carried 32,542. The reduction seems so excessive that really I can hardly believe it. We had then 380 miles of railway open. In the month of June, 1876—that is a winter month, and people travel less in the winter than they do in the summer—we carried 54,250 passengers, with a mileage of 245 miles. In June, 1877, we carried 65,572 passengers, with the same mileage as now, 380 miles.

894. Then there is a falling off of 33,000 in that month?—I cannot think it is so much; they must have made some blunder.

895. From the figures you have quoted there is a falling off of 33,000 in the month?—You must take that with a qualification. I can give you some certain information with regard to the booking from Christchurch, and that is the most important section we have. It is taken from the Booking Clerk's account. There is another thing that ought to be mentioned: In this July account of 1877, under the new arrangements, the month would be four weeks. The figures for a calendar month would make a difference of three days.

896. That is, three days' more passengers must be added to the 32,542?—Yes; the number of passengers booked from the 1st to the 28th July, 1876, with a mileage of 255 miles, was 12,614. In the same period of 1877, with a mileage of 380 miles, we booked 10,990 passengers. That you may rely upon.

897. Then you are of opinion that the effect of the new tariff has been that the public have made less use of the railways?—Well, from my own observation, I am bound to say that. I will tell you why. Saturday's traffic is very heavy, very heavy indeed, from the country stations, that is induced by the low fares, by the single fares for the double journey. We used to send twelve carriages well filled up by the North line; we brought them to town and took them back in the evening; and now from my own observation eight carriages have gone up only partially filled. No doubt it has fallen off very much, but it is quite possible that a great number of people may be inclined, in order to reduce these fares, to sacrifice their convenience for the time. I think it possible, however, that it may come round.

898. You think the whole falling off is attributable to the people's desire to punish themselves?—I have heard several observations from people about making the journey, the long distance from Christchurch, twice a month, while now they make one journey do. That seems to be the general idea for the long distance at any rate.

899. Now with regard to freight charges, classifications, and so forth, had it any effect upon the trade between Lyttelton and Timaru?—Yes; I may mention that I have been asked to report upon