

Mr. Lawson.
29th Aug., 1877.

the working of the tariff, and in that report I have suggested that Lyttelton and Timaru would apply as an exception to the uniform rate, just as much as Port Chalmers and Dunedin. I may also mention that I was told positively that two steamers were on, or were about to be placed on, the route. Formerly, before the last provincial tariff came into operation, there was a regular steam trade between Timaru and Lyttelton, but the effect of the new provincial tariff was to drive them off altogether—they ceased to run.

900. Is this tariff in force now?—Not the last provincial tariff. Now this trade is being resumed by the steamers.

901. In consequence of these high rates?—Yes; we cannot compete with Timaru from Lyttelton.

902. How would beer be affected by it?—Many complaints are made by the Christchurch brewers that they are shut out from the Timaru trade altogether.

903. What would be the difference?—The old rate was 24s. 2d. per ton for beer; the new rate is 40s. They say it has completely stopped their trade. It was shown in the Agricultural and Pastoral Association's statement as 25s., but this is an error.

904. *Mr. Ormond.*] What are the relative differences now?—40s. is the correct rate as against 24s. 2d.

905. Do you not think the present classification is rather cumbersome?—No; I do not think it is cumbersome; I think it wants revision. I would not suggest reduction, but merely revision.

906. Has the present tariff any effect upon the carriage of different kinds of grass-seeds?—Yes.

907. Do you think it is fair that clover weighing 65 lbs. the bushel should be carried at the same rate as rye-grass weighing 20 lbs.?—No; in my report about the tariff I have suggested that grass seed should be classified according to weight, because several kinds of grass-seed, I understand, are the same weight as wheat or beans. They should come in Class E, the same as those articles.

908. You think the present classification is proper, and only wants revision in regard to certain articles?—Yes, I think so.

909. Who do you think would be the proper persons to make that revision?—*Mr. Conyers* made a suggestion that a few of the Managers should be got together to revise this. That would be the best way. Each one understanding his own local circumstances would be best able to suggest how to classify the goods.

910. In making these classifications, did you as a Commission take into consideration the cost of the railways in different parts of the country?—No.

911. Neither the cost nor the maintenance?—No.

912. Well, is it not a fact that the rates upon imported coal on the Lyttelton and Christchurch Railway have been reduced upon the old provincial rates, and the rates upon domestic coal—Canterbury coal—have been increased?—Well, I could not speak positively about that.

913. For instance, coal from Malvern Hills?

Mr. Ormond: The coal is uniform now.

Witness: Yes, you are right, *Mr. Ormond*, it is; but the old provincial arrangements favoured local coal.

914. *Mr. Stevens.*] May I ask to what extent it is so?—The haulage is practically the same; we charge 10d. a truck per mile—that is, 2d. a ton. The old provincial arrangement was 2d. a ton per mile, with terminal charges added to it. Now, the loading and unloading is done by the owners.

915. What is the net result now—I mean as compared with the former system. Can you speak positively as to the country?—It is just the difference of the terminal. It bore rather hardly in that case, as they loaded the trucks, so that the department had nothing to do with it. Now it is done away with by reason of the terminal charge having been abolished.

916. *The Chairman.*] I understand you are carrying the coals upon the Christchurch and Lyttelton line—which costs about three times as much per mile as what the country railways cost—at the same rate as you are carrying on the country railways?—Yes, that is the uniform rate.

917. By reason of that, will there not be a very heavy loss in running the Lyttelton and Christchurch line, than on the old provincial tariff?—There will, in coal and timber.

918. And therefore imported coal and timber have an advantage in railway carriage to Christchurch over the coal and timber of the province?—They are on equal terms, it is a uniform rate.

919. I want to ask you something with regard to timber?

Mr. Ormond: He can tell you what the loss is.

Witness: The loss upon the Port Lyttelton and Christchurch line?

Mr. Ormond: Yes.

Witness: Well I should say, in round figures, it makes a difference of 2s. a ton to the Christchurch merchant.

920. *The Chairman.*] Do you find coal and timber any cheaper since this reduction?—No.

921. No cheaper?—No.

922. Then in fact this reduction upon the Lyttelton and Christchurch line has simply resulted in a profit to the importer and not to the public?—Yes, I presume that would be the case.

923. With regard to carrying timber to a distance, do you not think some allowance should be made for timber, as with grain and so forth?—Yes, I think it ought to be done.

924. You are speaking generally, I presume, of timber, firewood, &c.?—Yes; I think in places like Canterbury, it would be very desirable to have a sliding scale.

925. What is the arrangement with regard to parcels?—Parcels weighing over 56 lbs. have to be carried by goods trains.

926. Do you think it is desirable to increase the 56 lbs. up to 112 lbs. for the parcel?—I have reason to believe *Mr. Ormond* has already sanctioned the increase of the weight from 56 lbs. up to 112 lbs. *Mr. Conyers* gave me to understand he had spoken to *Mr. Ormond* about it, and he led me to believe *Mr. Ormond* had approved of it.

927. You think that would be a great convenience to the public?—It would meet the objection. I think parcels over 112 lbs. ought not to be carried in passenger trains; it is an inconvenience.