

Mr. Lawson.
29th Aug., 1877.

949. I think I shall clear the way by asking you how many trucks will be required, assuming that there will be no break in the gauge next season?—There will be a uniform break of gauge next season.
950. Well, how many trucks do you consider would be required?—600.
951. Do you know how many there would be then?—There would be 1,190 then.
952. I understand there is to be no break of gauge next grain season. How many trucks do you consider would be required to do the work when there is no break of gauge?—1,190. We have 890, and 300 more would be 1,190.
953. That would be enough, you think?—That I qualified before. That is the smallest number we can do with.
954. The broad gauge is to be replaced with the narrow gauge?—Yes.
955. Would the addition of 300 trucks to the present stock be sufficient?—Yes.
956. *The Chairman.*] If the broad gauge is done away with, you want 600 new trucks?—Yes.
957. *Mr. Stevens.*] As compared with other parts of the world, England for instance, how do your passenger rates stand?—Well, in England the passenger rates vary very much. They are much less than ours in most cases, I should say. I am not speaking by the book.
958. Can you give a general idea of what you consider would be the best passenger rates to adopt, with a view to keeping the traffic at a remunerative figure, and at the same time make it as reasonable as may be consistent with keeping the lines?—The present rate will be increased all round, I should say, to something like 15 to 20 per cent. I have not gone into the thing.
959. *Mr. Ormond.*] What is that, passenger rates or goods?—Passenger rates.
960. *Mr. Stevens.*] What would be the best rates to adopt?—The old rates that existed in Canterbury were satisfactory to the public. I am equally confident they were remunerative.
961. Now, just a word or two about the tariff. Did you express the opinion that a revision of the classification would remove the difficulties?—Yes, I did. I believe that.
962. But would classification remove the difficulties on live stock?—No.
963. Do you consider the present system of audit interferes with the proper settlement of claims—say, for instance, on goods?—No; it would not in any case interfere with goods.
964. Supposing you purchased for railway purposes a quantity of goods—say coal, for instance—in Christchurch, how long would it take to get a return of that from the merchant?—An account for freight?
965. No. Suppose you buy coal for use on the railway, or any other stores, how long would it take before the person supplying would receive his money?—Well, it can be done within a month.
966. Then, if you buy for cash, do you get some advantages, or do you get for cash at the same price on the system of monthly payment as you would get for cash?—I believe so, but that is entirely out of my department.
967. I understood you to say, in answer to a question by the Chairman, there is a saving of 2s. a ton in coal?—That is to the merchant.
968. Do I understand you to say that the consumer does not derive a benefit?—I do not think so. I can speak from my own knowledge that coal was the same price two months ago.
969. In the long run do you think that would be the case?—I do not know whether the merchants ever tried to increase prices when the rates have been raised in the matter of coal.
970. Well, in regard to these articles, do you think the reduction of the rates as a general principle operates as a benefit to the consumer?—I do not know; I cannot say. I can speak as to coal because it happens to come home to me.
971. Do you consider that there should be any allowance made for the depreciation of rolling-stock? I suppose that is in your department?—No, it would not be in my department; but it is the custom at Home.
972. Can you give me an idea from your experience what it should be per mile?—No, it has never come within my province.
973. As regards the persons employed on the railway, do you think there would be any advantage in making what I may call statutory provision of a fixed character in case of accident?—Yes, I think there ought to be some provision made for cases where a man is injured in the execution of his duty. It might be done by subsidizing the funds of a benefit society.
974. Do you think it would be better to have it done by subsidizing a benefit society, or by the Government independently making some fixed provision to meet these cases?—I think I should be in favour of subsidies to a fund, because it would induce the men to stick by a society of that kind.
975. As regards the pay of railway hands, is it uniform throughout the colony?—No, I think not. I think they pay a lower scale in the North Island than in the South.
976. *Mr. Bunny.*] It is being made uniform, is it not?—Yes.
977. *Mr. Stevens.*] As regards the ballasting train, I believe the men are dissatisfied? I heard they were?—It is quite out of my department altogether. Mine is entirely traffic.
978. The question of sites would be in your department?—Well, when an application is made for a site, it is generally sent to the traffic department to report upon as to whether it would be desirable for traffic purposes, and in that way it comes before me.
979. Can you give me your opinion as to the general question?—Yes, I have a strong opinion on that. I think every facility should be offered in up-country districts for sites on railway reserves for stores, with the view of equalizing the traffic and relieving Government sheds.
980. What do you think of the system as applying to suburban places?—I may even go so far as to say I should recommend it for Christchurch.
981. And the main suburbs of Christchurch?—Yes.
982. Any railway centre, in fact. You think it should be extended?—Yes, I do.
983. In regard to sidings in the immediate vicinity of railway stations?—I would recommend that.
984. You mean you would recommend that plan without reference to any particular railway?—Yes; for the simple reason that it would relieve the department from very much labour, because when men have a private siding they do the work themselves.