

985. It would relieve the railway yards?—Yes, it would relieve the railway yards and the expenses of the railway, even if we had to give them this 9d. per ton.
The Committee adjourned until 11 o'clock next day.

Mr. Lawson.

29th Aug., 1877.

FRIDAY, 31ST AUGUST, 1877.

MR. LAWSON examined.

Mr. Lawson.

31st Aug., 1877.

987. *Mr. Lumsden.*] If I understand you aright in your reference to the question about the traffic charges on the Lyttelton and Christchurch section of the line, it was that the merchant forwarding coals from Christchurch to Lyttelton would pay more than the merchant forwarding from Lyttelton to Christchurch would; that is, would pay more forwarding from the mine to Christchurch. Would the merchant in Christchurch forward coal to Lyttelton at less cost per truck than the merchant in Lyttelton from the ship's side?—The same rates.

988. I thought you said it was 2s. a ton in favour of the Christchurch merchant?—As a matter of fact we do not send coal from Lyttelton to Christchurch.

989. And from Christchurch inland?—We charge the same.

990. Well, it was stated as a difference of 2s.?—2s. a ton between the old rate and the new one.

991. But the present rate is founded on the other?—It is.

992. Well, I understood that the present rate was not founded on the other. In reference to the plan of keeping monthly accounts, you stated that in England it was generally adopted, and was found to be more convenient. Is there not a very great difference between England and New Zealand in this way: the accounts at any main station are necessarily more complex. That is, to suppose a passenger in London wants to go to Inverness, he can get a ticket right through. That necessitates the recognition of several claims and proprietary rights of companies whose lines the passenger would pass over, and that must involve a great deal more clerical labour. Now, in New Zealand, where the lines are all in the hands of one proprietor, and there is no necessity for dealing with the separate claims of different railway companies whose lines the passengers would pass over from North to South, therefore the accounts could be easier kept, and involve less clerical labour. There would be a difference between New Zealand and England in that respect?—The same principle obtained when the weekly system was in force. Practically, it makes no difference; they adopt the monthly system as a more economical one, and throw the weekly system over as being unnecessary.

993. Is there not an amount of extra labour saved by the fact of the line being in the hands of one company?—Well, the amount of difference of labour between the monthly and weekly system is considerable, and the weekly system is, as I said before, unnecessary.

994. That is not the point I wished to bring out. Suppose the lines from London to Inverness in the hands of one company, would it not be much easier than where a number of station clerks have to keep a record of several lines in the company's interest over which the traffic must pass?—It would increase the labour in the clearing-house.

995. Well, will you answer the question aye or no? Is there not more labour in connection with the traffic on the English lines, proportionately, than the New Zealand lines?—Yes, in that way; but I qualified that by saying it affects the clearing-house only, not the employes of the companies.

996. How is the increase of trucks to affect the block on the line?—We could, under the newly-altered arrangements, provide stores and increased storage accommodation at Lyttelton, and make it compulsory to discharge if not shipped direct.

997. That increases storage?—No; hitherto it has not.

998. *Mr. Ormond.*] You said there were four extra hands employed at Lyttelton and four at Christchurch. Do I understand that they were required by the weekly-account system?—Yes; so I am advised by those who have charge.

999. As to the work in the head office during the past six weeks, since the weekly system came into effect has there been any unusual work in the office?—Yes; there would be the closing of monthly accounts to the end of June, and before these could be closed the weekly accounts came upon us.

1000. When were those accounts finally made up?—I should say from the 20th to the 25th July.

1001. Was there, or was there not, any unusual pressure of work with regard to that?—Well, there was, because we had statistical information to furnish for Wellington, being session-time.

1002. Was there not special work in striking a correct balance-sheet?—Yes, there was.

1003. Can you say whether this department was not specially engaged upon accounts for the six months previously, during that month of July?—Yes; but understand me, please, that a number of extra hands were put on in addition to the permanent staff, in order to keep up the weekly system.

1004. During the past month?—Yes.

1005. In addition to four at Lyttelton, four at Christchurch?—Yes; but perhaps it would apply more particularly to the head office, to the Accountant's office.

1006. Would that be at Christchurch or Lyttelton?—At Christchurch.

1007. Do you or do you not think that during the month of July the office was so much kept at the previous accounts as not to be able fairly to try this new system?—Well, there was great pressure on account of the clearing up of the old monthly accounts.

1008. Was it not so that the accountants were unable for a long time to render anything like correct accounts?—Yes, it was so.

1009. And that went on to the 25th July?—Yes.

1010. *The Chairman.*] That was because you had the weekly system?—Yes. The Accountant tells me it will require two extra men permanently in his office, quite independent of the extra labour provided.