

*Mr. Lawson.*

31st Aug., 1877.

1113. And that was sugar?—Yes.

1114. And what reduction do you think would secure that trade?—I may say that 24s. 2d. for high-class goods got the trade entirely from Christchurch to Timaru. We competed with the steamers at that rate, and we got all the wool, grain, and general merchandise. We got all the traffic.

1115. Do you think we should gain more by the reduction between Lyttelton and Timaru by the old rate? Do you think the receipts would be greater or less?—We should secure the whole traffic. It would be a remunerative rate too, because it is a long distance.

1116. In such a case the rate would be considerably lower than the Provincial rate, now it is uniform?—We had weight or measurement.

1117. We should lose the difference between Timaru and Christchurch?—We have now adopted a uniform rate, and if we take the uniform rate and allow for the loss between Lyttelton and Christchurch, and reduce the charges to what they were before the uniform rates came into force—

1118. Will the rates then be less or more between Lyttelton and Timaru?—Upon the old Provincial tariff we charged a local rate between Lyttelton and Christchurch, and very considerably lower for through goods.

1119. Do you mean to say you had a special rate from Christchurch to Lyttelton, and a different rate for goods going inland?—Yes, considerably lower.

1120. What was the difference?—It was about one-third.

1121. I do not think you understand my question. Goods going south of Christchurch, did they pay the one rate from Lyttelton to Christchurch, and then a different rate to where they were being sent?—Yes.

1122. And have to pay the rate that was in force between Lyttelton and Christchurch?—No, they paid a lower rate.

1123. But still it was higher?—The A rate from Lyttelton to Christchurch was 6s. a ton, and if the goods were to be forwarded from Christchurch to Timaru it was 24s. 2d. We did not add 6s., we added 3s. 6d.

1124. And was that so in the case of goods going in as well as goods coming out?—The same.

1125. Was that the terminal charge?—No; that was considered to be the haulage charge.

1126. Have you, in your report upon the present tariff, pointed out the articles requiring modification of charges between Lyttelton and Timaru?—Yes.

1127. You spoke the other day about classification. Did you understand how the classification was arrived at in the Commission?—Yes, it was the Victorian system of classification that was adopted; it was considered it would be a suitable one for the colony, and it was adopted; it was understood that it had been in force, and had been found to work satisfactorily for several years.

1128. Was that done by the special sub-committee?—I think they left it in the hands of Mr. Conyers and Mr. Passmore and myself. I did not know anything about the system on the Victorian railways, but was given to understand that it had worked well there.

1129. But, in your opinion, it wants revision?—Yes.

1130. Have you recommended that in your report?—I have.

1131. Is it usual on railways to have this classification?—Yes.

1132. Do you think it is desirable?—It saves a great deal of reference to headquarters. It saves a great deal of question as to what classes certain goods should be charged; it is a sort of dictionary for the Stationmaster.

1133. You were asked a question about the coal trade, and so far as I followed your evidence it amounted to this: the rate on the imported coal had been lowered?—Yes.

1134. Then what about the rates on the Canterbury coal, have they been increased?—No. The tariff on the Canterbury coal was reduced a couple of years ago to 2d. a ton a mile, and the terminal charges added. The only difference it has made to the Canterbury coal proprietors is the allowance for terminals. They load and unload themselves.

1135. Do they get an advantage or disadvantage?—It would be considerably to their advantage. They have the terminal charges taken off. They get an advantage equal to 1s. a ton at each end.

1136. The charge is the same, but they get an advantage in the terminal allowance?—Yes, that is so; they do the work themselves.

1137. With regard to timber; you spoke just now of it bearing disadvantageously?—That applies to firewood—that class of timber only. I do not think there is any difficulty about sawn timber. That is quite satisfactory.

1138. The tariff on sawn timber is lower than it was?—Yes.

1139. What general recommendations did you make with regard to the firewood business in order to put it on a satisfactory basis. I think you have already mentioned that the carrying capacity of the wagons should be increased, and that would set the matter right. What is the authorized weight of the wagons?—That is 5 tons. It might be made 4 cords, which would equal 5 tons. It depends upon the quality of the timber.

1140. Do you think it can be done by the arrangement of the trucks?—Yes.

1141. What about the reduction on the long distance?—I should strongly recommend that in a place like Canterbury.

1142. At about what distance would you begin to reduce?—I think I would adopt the same plan as upon Classes A, B, C, and D.

1143. Now about the parcel rates?—That is a matter I think strongly about.

1144. Had you a parcels rate in Canterbury before?—Always.

1145. What were the rates there before they were reduced to the present?—Much about the same as now. There is no complaint as to charge. The only difficulty is weight. You have now sanctioned a maximum weight of 112 lbs., and that will set the matter right.

1146. You think the weight of 112 lbs. can be adopted without inconvenience to the passenger trains?—Yes.