

Mr. Lawson.
81st Aug., 1877.

1147. You do not remember, do you, the relative parcel rates under the old regulations to the present ones?—No.

1148. You think they were about the same?—I think them much about the same. There is no complaint as to charges.

1149. In the classification there is one item that I want information about in respect to your experience. It is agricultural implements. What induced the Commission to put them into their present class. I think they are in Class A. Well, we adopted the Victorian classification.

1150. But what induced you to put them into that class?—There is a great deal of labour in handling these things.

1151. That would not apply to all classes of agricultural implements?—To bulky and heavy pieces of machinery. That was the reason they were put in Class C.

1152. That would apply in the case of threshing machines and articles of that sort?—Yes.

1153. How do you manage at the up-country stations?—We have to send a travelling crane or shear-legs to get them off, and we charge additionally. Under the old arrangement it was 1s. 6d. a mile.

1154. What about the risk?—I think they should be at the owners' risk always.

1155. What are they now?—It is at the risk of the owners.

1156. Do you think we could reasonably alter the classification of these implements?—I think so.

1157. What is the cost to the railway now of discharging and taking in those things?—We used to charge the actual cost. We put a travelling crane on as a rule.

1158. And now you charge for that also?—No; we put on a 6d. rate, and that covers it all.

1159. If implements are put into another classification, ought we to make a profit?—I think the fairest way is to charge the actual cost. At some places they have the necessary appliances.

1160. Could we get at this by classifying these extreme articles in any particular way, putting the ordinary implements that can be moved easily in a much lower class. Would that meet it?—I should make this applicable to machinery over 2 tons in weight.

1161. How about the weighing? Would the public be inconvenienced if the weighing were stopped for all but our own purposes?—I think the farmers and producers would suffer, as they have no means of weighing.

1162. Would the inconvenience be very considerable or not?—I think it would be very considerable, but so far as the railway is concerned it is very objectionable.

1163. *Mr. Stevens.*] You mean having to weigh?—Yes, and being responsible for the weights given.

1164. *Mr. Ormond.*] The persons who would suffer would be the farmers?—Yes, the merchant would be always able to weigh.

1165. Your practice in weighing is to count by the bag?—Yes.

1166. I think you would only weigh in cases where you were doing so for the protection of the railway?—Yes; but under the new arrangement that is not necessary. If the sack contains over 4 bushels we are entitled to charge for the fractional part of a bushel. But under the old arrangement, when the bags exceeded 4 bushels we charged by actual weight.

1167. How did that arrangement work?—I prefer that.

1168. You prefer the old system?—Yes.

1169. You think it presses hardly upon the consumer?—I think so. I think the fairest way is to take it by weight when it exceeds 4 bushels.

1170. You do not think the railway requires that kind of protection as provided by the new tariff?—I may mention that the men handling the bags know at once when the contents exceed 4 bushels.

1171. What about the rolling-stock? In your evidence the other day you said that the 300 wagons ordered ought to be supplemented by an equal number to those dispensed with on the broad gauge?—Yes, I did.

1172. Did you remark also that the two gauges made it difficult to work the trucks?—I did.

1173. To what extent were these 278 broad-gauge wagons used; were they partially used on the railway? How many would you count then as effective? Suppose you had the narrow gauge during this last year, to what extent would you have dispensed with them?—Well, it is rather difficult to answer. It would make a sensible difference. I am confident I should be quite safe in saying one-third.

1174. You had blocks on the railway in Canterbury this last year had you not?—Yes.

1175. Were not the lines clear in the middle of the block with the stock you then had?—Yes, partially.

1176. Do you remember when Mr. Conyers visited Christchurch in the middle of the grain season?—I do.

1177. At the time he went over the lines was there a block in them?—There was.

1178. Was it clear before he left?—No more than it would be if he had never visited the place.

1179. But was that the fact that it was cleared?—I have no doubt that it would be, that in the three weeks we should have a partial clearance.

1180. Was the line clear or not?—Never during the whole of the season.

1181. The accumulations of grain were never clear during the whole season?—Never. We might clear a district, say the Southbridge branch, by running special trains and thoroughly clearing the stations, and then take another district.

1182. Are you aware whether Mr. Conyers reported that the lines were actually cleared before he left Christchurch?—I am not.

1183. You spoke of the cause of blocking. You gave as the cause, if I understood you rightly, the want of trucks for one thing?—Yes.

1184. And the break of gauge another?—Yes.

1185. Was there any other cause?—The want of country storage accommodation.