

1186. Was it caused in any degree by the people to whom the grain was sent in Lyttelton not taking delivery within the time prescribed by the regulations?—Partially so. In this way I may say I have seen seventy wagons standing three-fourths of the day at least in Christchurch waiting the disposal of the preceding train. At that time the wagons were simply warehouses.

1187. Was that so to any large extent?—Not so much this season as last and the previous seasons.

1188. Was that through the regulations, or what?—I do not know; I cannot speak as to the cause.

1189. Did you, or did you not, take that into account as a large element in dealing with grain—the storage of trucks?—Yes.

1190. Do you think the new regulation, which obliges delivery to be taken within four hours, will remedy that?—The four hours regulation applies to the outside traffic; I think we have five hours for shed goods; but then that applied always.

1191. Would that affect it sensibly, or not?—I think if we had sufficient storage in Lyttelton, and the power to discharge wagons immediately on arrival into sheds, when the ships are not ready to receive it, it would facilitate business very much.

1192. Do you think the storage rates now charged will oblige the grain merchants to take speedy delivery?—I find it a difficult matter to enforce it; we have a number of unsettled storage claims. Those who have incurred these say they cannot pay. The farmer brings produce to the country station, and does not get it away until the ship has cleared off to sea, by which he was calculating on sending it. He is then called upon to pay storage, waiting for another ship.

1193. Suppose your regulations enabled you to discharge within a certain number of hours, say four, would that meet the difficulty?—The four hours system would be a little help, but not satisfactory. We must have power to throw out the contents of the wagons (coals, timber, and the like) at a charge to cover the actual cost. I have made a recommendation.

1194. Do you think if facilities were offered for farmers or grain buyers to erect private stores and sidings it would meet the difficulty?—I am very hopeful that it would have that effect.

1195. Do you think they are liberal now?—I think they are very fair. They are very liberal.

1196. Have there been many applications for sidings of that kind?—Yes, they are coming in.

1197. What about the facilities for sidings in the country? Do you think the present facilities are liberal enough in that respect?—Yes, I think so.

1198. What about the present difficulties?—I have made a recommendation in reference to what I think would be additional inducements to people to have these private stores. In all cases where terminal charges are made, a remission of 9d. be allowed. The only condition I would attach is that when the goods are put into the trucks, the Railway Department should not be responsible for weight or quantity declared. I think that 9d. per ton a very fair thing to cover that risk. It would relieve the railways very much.

1199. How would that affect your staff?—It would reduce the staff.

1200. Proportionately?—Yes.

1201. How is it paid; by the hour or day?—We have a number of men at so much a day. We employ casual labour when there is a pressure of work.

1202. But the establishment of that system giving people these sidings. If the traffic was uncertain would you still have to keep up a high staff?—We should keep a minimum staff as now, and when the traffic is heavy put on extra labour at 1s. an hour.

1203. About the season tickets. How do they compare with the Canterbury railways under the old system?—They are much more favourable.

1204. And they have given free tickets in Canterbury for schools?—No; that applied to the national or public schools. These are abolished.

1205. The rates are low for school tickets?—Yes.

1206. What are they?—10s. per quarter.

1207. Is the luggage allowance to passengers sufficiently favourable to them? What do they get?—They were allowed 56 lbs. Now they are allowed 112 lbs.

1208. Does that affect the business on the railway?—No, I do not think so. I think it is a concession that ought fairly to be made.

1209. Would commercial travellers' luggage go under that 112 lbs.?—Yes; but there is a regulation charge for any excess.

1210. Does it meet the case of the small settler who brings in dairy produce?—It applies to personal luggage only, but it is rather difficult to define personal luggage.

1211. *The Chairman.*] You do not treat butter and eggs as personal luggage?—Certainly not.

1212. *Mr. Ormond.*] As a rule do they charge for produce of that kind?—For instance, if the butter were in a small basket and could be placed under the seat in the carriage, the Stationmaster would not charge, but if it were of a bulky character he would. Some three years ago, before the Canterbury rule was brought into operation, people from the country would come in with butter and all kinds of produce, and consider it personal luggage.

1213. *Mr. Stevens.*] Would you be kind enough to explain the process in the event of there being any loss on the railway on the consignment. Suppose it is reported to you by the consignee or consignor that there has been damage, what course is adopted?—Inspection is the first step, and if it is shown to be the fault of the Railway Department we pay the claim.

1214. It has been reported to me that a particular officer has been sent to make private arrangements in a certain case of alleged loss?—As a general rule such matters are dealt with under the regulations. We should inflict a fine or penalty on the officer in fault.

1215. Then, if any one said the officer who was in fault had been sent to effect a private settlement of the case, you would say it was an incorrect statement?—I believe a case of that sort occurred