

Mr. Lawson.
31st Aug., 1877.

recently in reference to some building material sent to Timaru. That is within the last month. But that is not the rule, and if such a case came under my notice I should not sanction it.
1216. But it is possible that such a case may have taken place?—Quite possible.
The Committee then adjourned.

Mr. Lawson.
1st Sept., 1877.

SATURDAY, 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1877.

Mr. LAWSON examined.

1217. *Hon. Mr. Richardson.*] Mr. Lawson, the question I was going to ask you yesterday was this: I see that a comparison has been made between the traffic in 1877 and 1876 for the months of July respectively. The change in the tariff came into operation on the 1st of July, did it not?—It did.

1218. During the month of June it was understood and advertised in the papers that the issue of return tickets at single fares on Saturday and Sunday would be done away with?—Not officially. It appeared as a local to that effect.

1219. It was generally understood so in Canterbury?—It was in the district. It was not advertised.

1220. It was gazetted?—I am not aware of it.

1221. In the tariff as gazetted was there any provision for issuing tickets at return fares on Saturday and Sunday?—No provision.

1222. Are you aware what was the effect of that upon the Saturdays during the month of June?—I believe there was a general rush; the trains were better filled.

1223. The traffic was exceptionally heavy on the last Saturday in June?—On the last two in June.

1224. What was the nature of the traffic on the first Saturdays in July—anything like the ordinary average?—From my own observation it was very light.

1225. Was it at all up to the average?—No.

1226. Was there any such disturbing influence in the month of July, 1876?—No.

1227. Do you consider that, for purposes of comparison, it would be fair to take the passenger traffic in the months of July, 1876 and 1877?—No, it would not.

1228. I was not present when you gave your evidence on the particular subject of weighing. I heard what you said yesterday. I think you said yesterday that you thought it would be a very good thing to do away with the weighing altogether?—I did.

1229. Did that remark apply to grain in particular, or to all goods and merchandise?—To weighing at up-country station sheds.

1230. That remark did not apply to the weighing of coal at Lyttelton?—No; by machine.

1231. You consider the Government should continue to weigh the coal?—Yes, at the Port and Christchurch.

1232. A great deal has been said about the dead-lock and want of trucks during last season. If the consignees of all that grain had been in a position to take delivery immediately upon arrival, would you not then have had sufficient trucks by running as many special trains as time permitted, to keep the line clear?—I think not in the last grain season. Previous to the last grain season we had. There was a large increase and consequent confusion.

1233. Would it not have remedied that block in a great measure if the consignees had been able to take away their grain immediately on your bringing it to its destination at Christchurch or Lyttelton?—If the Railway Department had power to shift it from the trucks immediately on arrival it would have been a very great help; but, as a general rule, the consignees would take the full time allowed.

1234. If they had been prepared, and did take delivery immediately on arrival at destination, would it not have materially assisted there being no block?—It would have materially assisted the railway.

1235. Have you along that line sufficient passing places to enable you to run as many special trains as you desire?—There is one more I would suggest—namely, between Dunsandel and Rakaia, a distance of eleven miles. That would be a help to us. There is a large traffic going along there.

1236. With the exception of one in that district, you have passes sufficiently close to enable you to run as many trains as any amount of traffic would require?—Yes.

1237. On the subject of special trains, would you state to the Committee what you think would be, from your knowledge in these matters—which, I believe, is very extensive—the manner in which you consider it would be best to deal with that subject, and what rates should be imposed? What would be fair rates for special trains? I mean private special trains?—I think on a single line of rails it is objectionable to have those urgent special trains at any time. I do not think the tariff should be so regulated as to encourage the use of them, but they should not be prohibitory. My own idea is that there should be a minimum of about £1 per mile for the first five miles, and 10s. a mile after, and this decreased as the distance increased. For long distances it should be subject to still further reductions.

1238. Where would you suggest that the further reduction commenced?—After fifty miles. In fact, I would make it 5s. a mile after that, and if the train was wanted for the return journey, which is not often the case for long or even short distances, I should make a charge of about 25 per cent. additional for the return journey. I will give my reasons for suggesting that. A person may want a special train in the morning for twenty miles, which would be £12 10s., and that train might be kept the whole day; it might be kept for an hour, four hours, or the whole day. Then we should be simply giving a train the whole day for twenty miles for £12 10s.

1239. Would you propose, then, to have any fixed regulation for the charge you would make in