

Mr. Lawson.
1st Sept., 1877.

1264. Did you not, as Manager of the railways, advertise that the return tickets were to be continued to be issued?—Yes; but I do not think that was before the beginning of the month of July. I am not at all certain on that point.

1265. Are not both advertisements and local paragraphs to be found in the Christchurch papers prior to the 1st July, stating that return tickets would continue to be issued?—Yes; I think you are right in that respect; but I doubt whether those advertisements and paragraphs had the effect of fully doing away with the impression, because people in the out-districts, who would be most likely to travel in order to save money, would probably not see the papers very soon.

1266. That might possibly apply to the first week?—Yes; and to the second and third week too.

1267. Do you think that circumstance had any material effect upon the traffic?—Certainly; I think it had.

1268. I wish to ask you this: Do you think a return to the old tariff would produce an increased revenue to the Government, and give greater satisfaction to the public?—Yes.

1269. *Mr. Stevens.*] In reference to passengers?—Both passengers and goods. I am strongly of that opinion. The old tariff worked remarkably well, and I think it was a mistake to alter it.

1270. *The Chairman.*] I think you have said that the periodical clearing of country stations did to a certain extent relieve the block which occurred some time ago?—Yes; the total clearance. It gave the greatest satisfaction at any rate.

1271. But did it not produce the greatest dissatisfaction at stations which were not cleared?—It did.

1272. Did not a considerable number of people, whose stations were not for a long period cleared, complain that trucks went continually past their stations, which were blocked?—Yes.

1273. You have told us the Government should offer facility for the erection of sidings and stores at country stations?—Yes.

1274. Do you consider the printed conditions offer sufficient inducements to farmers to provide sidings and private sheds?—I think so.

1275. Do you consider that the Government should exact from the proprietors, or those erecting sheds, a guarantee of a certain amount of traffic before the sidings and stores are allowed to be erected?—I do.

1276. Do you think it fair that the Government should retain the power of closing the sidings at any moment they think proper, and so destroy the whole investment?—I think some compensation is given in such cases, but I am not sure. No doubt the builder of a store should have some protection. The present provisions on this point are somewhat arbitrary.

1277. Is it not within your knowledge that complaints have been made by Royse, Stead, and Co., and the Mercantile Agency, and other parties, who have gone to great expense in building stores, that there is no finality in the arrangements of the Government?—That is true as regards Lyttelton and Christchurch.

1278. Would you not recommend the Government to take some steps to secure proper stores at Lyttelton and Christchurch; and that there should be some finality in the arrangements they make?—It is very desirable, no doubt.

1279. You have been for many years Manager of railways, and I should like to ask you this: Do you not think it would conduce to the interests of the Government, and the interests of the public, that the railways should, as far as possible, be under local management entirely?—Yes, I do think so.

1280. That Managers should be appointed to certain subdivisions of the colony, and that they should have almost unlimited control over the railways in those subdivisions?—Yes, with a certain amount of control at head-quarters.

1281. That is, the political head?—Yes.

1282. Where do you draw the line?—Well, I would suggest that no great change should be made without special sanction from head-quarters, but that the ordinary arrangements for the management of the line should be left to the General Manager.

1283. Would you allow him the power to change Stationmasters when he pleased?—Yes.

1284. Would you allow him to make special arrangements with regard to freight?—With individuals?

1285. Yes.—No. Anything done in that way should be upon a general plan or principle.

1286. Do you think the Government should hand the railways of the various subdivisions—supposing the colony was so subdivided—over to the respective General Managers, and say, "There are the railways. Work them as you will. We hold you responsible for the satisfactory working of them?"—I think such a course would be desirable.

1287. Do you think it necessary to have engineers and managers in Wellington acting as a kind of a go-between between the local managers and the political head of the department?—No; I think it would be better for the local heads to be subject only to the political head.

1288. *Mr. Stevens.*] Let us clearly understand you. Do you think that the maintenance of the permanent way and the erection of new stations or sidings, or other works of that kind, should on each line be under the control of the Manager of the line?—I think all expenditure outside the estimates—the departmental estimates—should be authorized from Wellington.

1289. *The Chairman.*] I suppose you mean that such matters should be referred to the political head, and not to the engineer of lines to be constructed?—Exactly. No one in the case of constructed lines should come between the Minister for Public Works and the General Manager.

1290. *Mr. Richardson.*] I wish to ask you this. Supposing that damage occurs to a small consignment of goods while in the possession of the railway authorities, and the consignee thinks the department is to blame, is there any process by which he can speedily take the matter into the Resident Magistrate's Court and have it settled? Has the Government appointed any one in Christchurch or Lyttelton, say, to sue or be sued on behalf of the Government in these small matters?—I understood that I, as so-called General Manager, could sue, but the question of being sued has not been settled.