

- Mr. Arthur.** classification that obtained on your railways before?—Speaking generally, I believe it is an improvement.
- 11th Sept., 1877.** 1485. Do you find it more convenient to yourself and the public to work, and less expensive?—It is not so convenient to the department, but I believe it is more profitable to the public.
1486. Are you in a position to say whether there has been more or less traffic on your lines of railway under the present system than under the other?—I am not of opinion that the present classification has either increased or decreased the traffic upon the lines. I refer to the general working of the new classification locally; but on the Port line between Invercargill and Bluff, where goods are carried by measurement, it has affected the traffic. Rates charged are 6d., 5d., 4d., 3d., and 2½d. Goods locally carried under the present classification are carried by dead weight. On the Port line they are carried by measurement, which in many cases doubles the rates.
1487. Is there less traffic under the present system of charges than under the other system?—I cannot say there is less, unless on the Port line.
1488. And do you know whether there is less on the Port line or not?—We have lost several shipments, which we otherwise would have had had the previous tariff been in operation.
1489. *Mr. Macandrew.*] How have these shipments gone?—Direct to Invercargill.
1490. That is coastal shipments?—Yes. With your permission, I will read a letter from the Chamber of Commerce referring to the same matter. [Letter from Chairman of Invercargill Chamber of Commerce to witness, put in and read. See Appendix C.]
1491. *The Chairman.*] Can you furnish the Committee with a return of the number of passengers for the months of June and July last on your division of railways?—I can give you the cash receipts. In June the traffic amounted to £1,047 7s. 5d.; in July to £1,041 5s.
1492. Have you had any increase in the mileage of your railway during these two months?—No, none.
1493. Are you then of opinion that, if the old rates had been maintained, there would have been any increase in July on the June receipts?—I may state that the alteration, so far as the Invercargill Section is concerned, is rather a reduction than otherwise. Previous to the narrow gauge, we had only one class—second class. The second-class fare to the Bluff was 5s.; now it is 4s. 3d. first class. There is no complaint so far as the passenger traffic is concerned. The only complaint is in reference to the charges on the Port line.
1494. Would you recommend any alteration in the classification at present? Are there any special articles in an anomalous position?—There are many items which can be easily rectified as they are brought under the notice of the department from time to time.
1495. *Mr. Stevens.*] As General Manager, which I understand is your title, do you have control of anything besides the traffic, and of course the hands connected with it?—No, sir. The hands connected with the Engineering Department and maintenance of way and works are directly under the control of the Assistant Engineer.
1496. Do you report direct here or to Mr. Conyers?—To Mr. Conyers.
1497. How many miles of railway are in active operation under your control?—130 miles.
1498. Can you tell me the percentage which the working bears on the receipts of traffic?—Probably 75 per cent.
1499. From your experience, what do you consider would be a proper rate, taking, say, five years? What would be a fair and proper rate—I mean a satisfactory rate?—I think 75 is a very satisfactory rate.
1500. On a railway with an extensive traffic?—I believe so.
1501. What do you consider, in your district, ought to be a fair proportion in the working expenses (not including depreciation of permanent way, rolling-stock, &c.), and the gross receipts from traffic?—On the Invercargill Section it has never reached 75. It has been 60 to 65, including everything connected with the working of the railways.
1502. Has the traffic been very heavy?—Not very heavy.
1503. *Mr. Lumsden.*] Has any complaint been made to you respecting the goods traffic charges: I refer to timber, bricks, and stones for building purposes?—I may state that some time ago I recommended that a reduction be made in the freight of timber.
1504. And stone?—It might be reduced. I would also recommend that, instead of carrying it under the present classification, a special rate be levied, with a reduction of 5s. per truck containing five tons.
1505. As now, is your scale higher or lower than before?—Something similar. So far as bricks are concerned, it is lower.
1506. For general traffic, what is it?—It is higher on the Port line, where goods are carried by measurement. Where goods are carried locally by dead weight, it is lower.
1507. What are the charges when goods are carried to Invercargill from Dunedin?—15s.
1508. Do you know what it is from Port Chalmers to the Bluff?—15s. generally.
1509. Then they will bring goods to Invercargill for the same?—If they can get back-loading.
1510. Who appoints the officers in your department connected with the traffic?—The Superintending Engineer, on the recommendation of the General Manager.
1511. That is, clerks in your own department?—Yes.
1512. Have you had any complaints from officers lately?—No complaints of any kind.
1513. Have any of them been suspended within the last twelve months?—None.
1514. Then all the appointments of officers connected with the traffic are made by Mr. Conyers?—By the Superintending Engineer, Mr. Conyers.
1515. What is your opinion about the propriety of selling tickets outside the station?—In populous districts it might do very well under very stringent conditions, but as regards the Invercargill Section, I do not think it applicable. It would only be a loss to the department.
1516. Was any of last year's wool traffic taken up by drays in competition with the railway?—I am not aware of any. With reference to a previous question, I should like to say that, when in