

1697. Have you seen the papers where Mr. Conyers positively protested against appointing them?—I do not remember that he did that. I admit that in the general instructions there was this indication about a second man for the brake. This was taken to mean, as I understand, by the officers down South, that there was to be a second guard to the train; upon that a large number were appointed.

1698. By whom?—By the officers down there.

1699. Without consulting you?—Yes. The first I heard of it was when Mr. Richardson came to Wellington. He asked me if I knew of these appointments. I said No; it could not be so. I made inquiry, and found it was.

1700. And gave orders for its being changed at once?—I did.

1701. Was that order obeyed?—No; by press of work, it was a couple of weeks before it was acted on.

1702. Are you aware that, instead of your orders being carried out, they were simply called by another name, and assigned other duties?—The minute I put on my papers was this: That these appointments of persons to be ticket collectors, appeared to be entirely unrequired by the instructions; and I said I supposed porters travelled to do the work of loading and unloading at stations, and those persons should assist at the brake. The instruction was to strike off all men who were ticket clerks. That order was accidentally delayed in my office. There was a negligence about it.

1703. Did you hear Mr. Conyers say that when he got instructions he protested against it, being an extra and useless expense?—What I thought he said was this, that he protested against the necessity of a second man with the train.

1704. If Mr. Conyers stated he protested against the appointments as a useless expense, I suppose you would think it was so, would you not?—Yes; if the papers had come to me, I should have agreed with him. About the appointment of officers by the Superintending Engineers, I should like to add this to what I have already said, that I still think it is necessary and desirable that the Minister should keep in his own hands the approval of these appointments. At the same time, I say the head officer's recommendation would always be given effect to, unless good reasons were given for its not being supported; and, in connection with that subject, I think it is necessary (and I mean to have it carried out on the railways) that there should be a regular system of promotion throughout the department, so that it will not be left to the officers to leave one man behind, who may be a good public servant, and allow another to go over his head. This must be done, of course, with regard to qualifications. I think the department wants organizing, and it will never be efficient until employes know they have a regular chance of promotion. It has not been so in the past, in my opinion.

1705. In the expenditure on the Auckland and Mercer line, I want to ask you whether any proportion of the expenses of the workshops in Auckland were charged to that line?—Not in the buildings, or supplying them with tools, and so on. That will come out of loan.

1706. But the work done?—All repair-work done ought to be charged.

1707. The workshops in Auckland, then, are not part and parcel of the Auckland and Mercer Railway?—Yes.

1708. Is their prime cost included in the cost shown?—Yes; the whole of the rolling-stock is apportioned to the different railways.

1709. Do the Auckland workshops repair for any other railway?—It takes in the whole length from Kaipara to Puniu. I should say that was one of the things which engaged a great deal of Mr. Passmore's attention, to put nothing on constructed that ought to be on construction.

1710. I should like to ask, has anything been done relative to the charge on goods at country stations after twelve hours?—An instruction has been given that the regulation with regard to the charge on goods after twelve hours at the country stations is not to be rigidly enforced, unless there is a pressure of work and the sheds are full. I am quite aware that a great deal of inconvenience has been caused by these small Stationmasters rigidly enforcing the regulation. It is difficult to get some of them to understand these matters.

1711. Have you done anything about the East Oxford petition, which was laid on the table of the House?—I think some alteration has been ordered. I made inquiry, and I think I approved of some alteration.

1712. Have you arranged with regard to the carrying of stock between Rangiora and Ashley Bank?—We have generally approved of new regulations for the carrying of stock.

1713. This is a new thing which I refer to?—There has been no special arrangement made.

1714. Will you tell the Committee whether you will undertake to look into the matter and see if any special arrangement could be made?—I had proposed postponing doing anything with the tariff question until the session is over. It is a very large matter. I found, in some cases, that it was necessary to deal with them at once, and I did so. I do intend to take the whole question up and give attention to it.

1715. Can you tell me anything about that large new store built on the Gladstone Pier in Lyttelton—by whom it was designed and built?—It was built before my time. I fancy by the railway authorities.

1716. Was it the Engineer-in-Chief who designed it, and the General Government who built it?—I think so.

1717. Did not the Harbour Board authorities make a demand upon the General Government for rent. Do they not claim it?—A question arose between the Harbour Board and the General Government about that store. The Harbour Board claimed it just before the grain season.

1718. They claim rent?—They said that would be a proper solution.

1719. Do you not think that, having been built by the General Government, it belongs to the General Government, and should not be handed over as an asset or means of profit to the Harbour Board?—Now I come to recollect, the store was built prior to our taking over the lines, and it has been valued with the Canterbury railways.

1720. Do you think that store is being used by the railway?—It is sure to be used. I have had before me accounts of things that have been put into it.

Mr. Ormond.
13th Sept., 1877.