

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 17TH AUGUST, 1877.

Mr. Carruthers.

Mr. CARRUTHERS examined.

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1. *The Chairman.*] Will you be kind enough to explain your position as to the management of constructed and constructing railways, and the system adopted?—The line between the constructed and constructing railways is very difficult to draw. As far as constructed railways are concerned, being Engineer-in-Chief, I have everything to do with the whole of the lines, excepting the details relating to traffic management, which are left in the hands of the managers, or to Mr. Conyers, who is Superintending Engineer in the South Island. Mr. Passmore held a similar position in the North Island. There is also a general supervision which the Engineer-in-Chief holds. It is hard to draw the distinction between the special duties relating to constructed and constructing railways.

2. Will you explain, Mr. Carruthers, what your powers are, as to what you can or cannot do. Who is responsible to you?—If you could name any particular thing.

3. We cannot. We are inquiring into the system of railway management?—I should say that if a Manager wanted to incur any expenditure, chargeable to loan, he would have to get authority from a Minister. The requisition would pass through me for recommendation.

4. As to the employment and dismissal of servants especially, what power have you?—The employment and dismissal of servants would also pass through me. Much power would rest with the Traffic Manager; unless there was good reason for doing otherwise his recommendation would be followed.

5. There is one question I will ask, which I understand is to be put to all engineers—it is, what experience have you had as a Manager of constructed railways?—Well, I have never been a Manager of a constructed railway, and I am not now; but I have been a Railway Engineer nearly all my life. The line of distinction between the duties pertaining to a constructed and a constructing railway is not easily drawn. My experience is that the Engineer-in-Chief is in charge of both. I am not in any way a Traffic Manager. A Traffic Manager's trade is a special one in itself, like everything else.

6. Would it be part of your duty to issue instructions to servants as to how the work was to be carried out?—Yes.

7. You were a member of the late Railway Commission?—I object to the term. The word Commission ought not to be applied to it. I see the word has got into the report, but that was quite a slip. It got into one place at the end.

8. I do not mean any offence in putting the question, as I see it is used in the report?—Yes.

9. By whom were these men appointed?—They were not appointed. Mr. Richardson, then Minister of Public Works, told me he wished me to go down South and meet Mr. Conyers and to take Mr. Passmore with me; Colonel Gorton was to accompany us in connection with the Stores Department, and Mr. Fitzgerald for the Department of Audit. We were to examine the system of accounts kept on the line, and draw up a uniform system for the whole of the railways.

10. Yes. We will come to that directly. I want to know if there was any written authority for your acting?—There was no instruction issued beyond what I have stated. There was nothing beyond verbal instruction. When I went down South, I understood it was merely matters in connection with accounts that we had to investigate. When other matters came up, I said that we were going beyond our authority. Only a telegram came from Mr. Richardson saying that we had to report upon other things. It was never intended that the report should be printed and hawked about the country as an important railway document. It was a departmental report furnished by officers in the department on account of their special knowledge.

11. With regard to the report, it recommends weekly accounts instead of monthly, and the Government have adopted the recommendation?—They have maintained it; it was always adopted in the North Island.

12. Would you be kind enough to state whether you think it is any improvement on the monthly accounts?—I do not think it makes much difference. Weekly accounts are very much in use in other parts of the world. They were used on railways that I was on in America, and are also used in Ireland on some of the railways there; but are not used in England. I think they are used in Scotland on some lines.

13. Under this new system is there much more work involved?—I think not. We made inquiries, and the majority of Stationmasters think there is less work with the weekly system.

14. I only ask your own opinion?—My opinion is that there is very little difference. In head offices an extra clerk might be required.

15. You do not think there is any more trouble in making up accounts four times for the month than in making them up once?—No; because errors are much more quickly found out. Only in large stations would any difference be made in the work. I do not think it is a very important matter; monthly accounts are quite good enough, and weekly accounts are quite good enough.

16. Can you tell how many returns are made up by every station in the country?—I could not say off-hand.

17. Do you think there are fifteen or seventeen at each station?—I think there are about two—that is, things that would be called returns. I will refer to the returns named in the report.