

Mr. Carruthers.

20th Aug., 1877.

166. Do you think there is any likelihood for some time to come that there will be any establishment there of a sufficient size to enable it to manufacture successfully any class of rolling-stock?—I think that the Government workshops will be able to manufacture a great part of the rolling-stock, but wheels and axles will always probably be cheaper when imported from England. They may be able to make wheels and axles in Dunedin, but I doubt whether so cheaply as we can import them. Frames and sides of wagons may be built, but not other things. For instance, for springs we should have to import the steel, and it is just as cheap to import springs as the steel to make them of. I do not think locomotives can be constructed for a long time to come.

167. Are you aware whether the ironwork of rolling-stock made in Victoria is imported?—I believe it is to a great extent.

168. With regard to this report, clause 62, "Where the gradients on a line are unusually heavy, or where the cost of construction has been unusually great, the scale should be constructed by increasing the mileage in proportion to the gradients or cost for the purpose of the calculation." Is that your opinion still?—Yes.

169. Mr. Lumsden.] Did the reference in the Victorian report cover ordinary wagons?—It referred to rolling-stock generally; but I suppose it would not cover ordinary wagons, because I believe if they imported the wheels and axles the rest would be made well enough in the colony. We have made some very good wagons here, but we had to import axles and wheels.

170. You have seen the carriages constructed by Findlay Brothers of Dunedin?—Yes.

171. The wheels and axles were imported?—Yes.

172. Do you think if the Government imported these articles the other material might be obtained and worked up in the colony?—Yes, eventually. Of course we should have to import the iron too. We could not make channel iron for sole plates here, and then there would be the spring steel; and, as I said before, it is quite as cheap to import the springs as the steel for them—in fact, it would be cheaper; for we should then not have to pay for waste steel, and there is no inconsiderable quantity wasted. This amounts to pretty well what we do now. We call for tenders at home for ironwork, and then tenders are called in the colony for the whole of the woodwork.

173. What is your experience of New Zealand timber for this work?—We have not used a great deal of New Zealand timber, and I do not know that we have any timber very good for the purpose, except puriri—that is very good. Matai and totara, and most of the New Zealand timbers, are very brittle, and would hardly do for frames.

174. Have you tried kauri?—We use it for planking and sides, so we do matai and totara; but it is of no use for frames.

175. Have you tried kamai, from the Southland District?—I got up some specimens in order to test its strength, and found it the weakest of all—weaker than totara. They were very nice-looking specimens, and were it not for its very brittle character would be a nice wood. I was surprised when I tested it at the Museum and found it so weak.

176. Our experience is just the contrary. We find, with care and careful management, letting it dry slowly, that it is excellent wood. Have you also tried rata?—We have not used any great amount of it. It is not very durable.

177. You adhere to the opinion that higher rates should be charged upon some lines than upon others?—Yes, as stated in paragraph 62, E. 2. Take Lyttelton to Christchurch as an instance. We would increase the nominal length of that line from six or seven miles to, say, ten.

178. Then there should not be a uniform system?—No; uniformity should, I think, be abandoned in extreme cases, in order to allow for extra charges where the country is heavy. I do not think that one portion of the community should be taxed higher than another, for I consider the railway charges to be a tax after all; therefore, there should be uniformity as far as possible. There is another thing: if the rates are not uniform as far as possible, there would be pressure brought to bear to have the rates reduced on each particular section.

179. The rates on the Port Chalmers line have been reduced already?—Not below the usual sum. Throughout the colony generally we charge by weight, whereas at Port Chalmers we charge both by weight and measurement. We take the ship's manifest and charge by weight where it pays best, and by measurement where it pays best, because the ships do so; so that the rates are higher on that line, if taken as a whole, than they are elsewhere.

180. Do you think return tickets encourage traffic?—I think low rates induce traffic. I do not think return tickets have any effect except so far as they are lower in price.

181. In reference to the sale of tickets outside the station, do you approve of tickets being sold at shops?—I think there would be a great chance of loss, and I do not think there would be very much business done under the system. In the first place I think you would not get very many persons to sell railway tickets—when you come to think what a large amount of capital a man must lay out before he could do so. He would require four tickets for every station, and as in Canterbury there are seventy or eighty stations, he would require 300 tickets, so as to have on hand only one of each kind of ticket. If he had three or four of each it would run up to 1,200 tickets, and as the average may be taken at 10s., that would be £600. I do not think many persons would feel inclined to make such an outlay; and while I do not think it would save the public any trouble whatever, it might lead to a great deal of forgery and cheating by the officers of the Government. Very little good would be effected.

182. Mr. Seymour.] Would it not be desirable for the railway offices to be open for the sale of tickets at some other time besides five minutes immediately before the train starts?—That has been done now. The object of selling tickets only immediately before the train started was to allow clerks to go on with their work uninterruptedly; but no doubt the practice has been carried to an extreme, and the public ought to be allowed to purchase tickets for a longer period.

183. I thought they ought to be able to do so a day or two before?—I should think tickets ought to lapse on the day of issue, as nearly as possible.

184. You think there would be an objection to a person going to the railway station, and buying tickets for use on Monday morning?—I think so.