

1782. Do I understand that none of them have private practice now?—I think not. I should not interfere with anything they had in hand.

1783. You say you are of opinion that none of those officers availed themselves largely of this privilege?—Yes.

1784. Are you aware how far any of those officers have availed themselves of it?—I know, for instance, that the Engineer-in-Chief was the advising or consulting engineer to the Christchurch Drainage Board.

1785. Would you be surprised to know that one officer had perhaps received altogether within a moderate time some £1,500?—I know that he has. You are referring now to the Engineer-in-Chief.

1786. Or that another officer had received nearly £1,000?—I do not know in the other case.

1787. You are aware that one had received not less than £1,500?—Yes. What I meant was they did not take up work that took up a great deal of their time. It was to the time, not the pay, that I referred. As the Engineer-in-Chief's name has been mentioned, I may say he resigned voluntarily his position as consulting engineer to the Drainage Board.

1788. You do not approve of the principle?—No; but undoubtedly they lose emolument.

1789. Do you think that private practice has injured the public service in any way?—I am not aware that it has.

1790. You are in favour of having a practical General Manager for the colony?—I believe the railways are getting so extensive that such management has become necessary.

1791. Considering the nature of the insular separation that belongs to the two Islands, and the rapid extension of the railways, would it not be prudent, to facilitate and insure the proper conduct of the railways, that a General Manager should be appointed for each Island?—I do not think so. I think, if we get a suitable man, he would be able to direct the traffic business in both Islands. On the North Island lines the business is very small. One thoroughly efficient man could direct the traffic business on the railways of both Islands.

1792. If there were only one practical manager at a certain place, and a case of urgency arose requiring his attendance somewhere else, it might be a couple of days or more before he could get to where his attendance was required?—I do not think those cases of urgency are likely to arise. The railways will go on like machinery if we get our men well directed. My opinion, as now given to the Committee, applies to our present necessities—what is wanted at the present time.

1793. Would you kindly state what orders, if any, are now *in transitu* to Britain and other places for railway and other material; I mean that are not delivered?—They are very limited. All I remember is that there are some five or six locomotives ordered, and I think some rails for the Western railways. They were ordered, I think, about six weeks or two months ago. That is the last order.

1794. Do you remember what value of rails?—Not to any large extent. There was a fair order for rails sent Home just before the session.

1795. To what amount?—About forty miles of rails were ordered.

1796. You do not know what they would come to?—Not off hand.

1797. Presuming tenders had been called for supplying the public works in the colony with those rails, would they not be likely to have been delivered cheaper to the Government?—It is a subject I have not considered, but I should say not. At present we get all the advantages that persons in business would get, or rather more. We get the allowance which a very large purchaser would get, and the proportionate charge of the Agent-General's office would be very small indeed in proportion to the cost of this material. The supervision of these things and the getting them first-class is a great requisite, and that is insured also.

1798. May I ask if it is your intention in the future not to import any more plant or material, but to call for tenders in this colony for everything requisite?—So far as they can be procured with advantage in the colony. I should think it right to import if cost in the colony was largely in excess of Home rates, or if, by the experience of other countries, we saw they could not be produced equally good.

1799. Do you not think it would be worth a trial to throw the responsibility upon responsible people in the colony?—I should like to take evidence on the subject before giving an opinion about the importation of railway plant. It is quite a new idea to me. Generally, with regard to rolling-stock and the material that has been hitherto imported by the Government, the Government, as I yesterday said in the House, is taking steps to get in a position to call for tenders in the colony. I have called on the Engineers to supply me with an estimate of the probable rolling-stock required in the colony for the next two or three years; and my object in doing that was to call for tenders for the supply of those articles to see how far the tenders could be availed of, and how far the firms that were ready to enter into this business could provide themselves with the parts they would have to get at Home, to supply at intervals of twelve months, eighteen months, two years, and so on, different kinds of vehicles. That estimate is not yet in my hands, but as soon as it is, tenders will be called for.

1800. Are you personally acquainted, or have you taken steps to be so, with the manufacturing capabilities of the principal factories in the chief cities of the colony?—I have no large experience in the matter.

1801. You have had no reports?—No. Of course I know they are capable of turning out a great deal of material. I was going to say, with regard to the manufacture of these things in the colony, that probably a month or six weeks ago an offer came up from one of your largest firms in Dunedin for supplying wagons. I forget the name of the firm. Mr. George McLean told me it was one of the largest firms. I think it was Sparrow. He offered to supply 100 wagons, naming a certain price, and saying that he believed that was about 10 per cent. above what we returned as the price when imported by ourselves. I had this question asked him, "What parts would you import?" The answer was, "Of course we should import the wheels and axles." That and the other iron-work for the wagons is all the Government imports now.

1802. A travelling Inspector has been appointed?—In connection with the audit, yes.

Mr. Ormond.

13th Sept., 1877.