

2172. Any live-stock?—Very little; just occasionally.

2173. Wool?—I have had no experience of the wool season.

2174. Does the railway get the major part of the goods traffic in these items you speak of?—It does. Mr. Stone.
25th Sept., 1877.

2175. That is to say, that timber, firewood, and so forth are not extensively carried by other means?—No.

2176. *Hon. E. Richardson.*] Do you get the larger share of the goods going up the country?—I could scarcely say. The amount is small we get going up; but I could not say what the total quantity is that goes up by road and rail.

2177. What other means of communication outwards from Wellington are competing?—The main road runs parallel with the railway. It is a first-class road nearly all the way up.

2178. Can things be carried more economically by road?—I think so, if going for a distance up the country. It appears to be so, unless they find it more convenient.

2179. Will the moving of the station from the end of the town tend to increase the goods traffic?—Not much, I think. Of course, there will be perhaps a quarter of a mile difference in the carting.

2180. What do you think will be the effect of the opening of the next length to Kaitoki?—I have not been there, and am not acquainted with the country. I have formed no opinion of my own.

FRIDAY, 28TH SEPTEMBER, 1877.

Mr C. Conyers.
28th Sept., 1877.

Mr. CONYERS examined.

The Chairman: Mr. Conyers is present to explain questions 390 and 391, page 18.

2181. *The Chairman.*] Mr. Conyers, in question 391 I put a question to you, and I now wish you to explain to me whether you desire to qualify that answer. The question was as to the number of wagons?—I merely wish to state that 287 broad-gauge wagons will not be taken off the Port Lyttelton line immediately; they will be left until we are satisfied we have sufficient narrow-gauge wagons to carry on the work properly; but the gauge from Christchurch to Amberley will be altered at once. The Lyttelton line will have the broad-gauge for some time longer.

2182. At present, Mr. Conyers, all the constructed lines are under the management of the Engineer-in-Chief?—They are.

2183. Will you give the Committee some idea as to how that works with regard to repairing permanent-way, where sleepers and stores or rails are required?—For the purpose of repairs?

2184. For the purpose of repairs.—The line that is finished?

2185. Yes. Just tell us what is the *modus operandi* of obtaining sleepers for the maintenance of the way and rails?—Under the present system there are two distinct store departments—one connected with constructed railways, and one belonging to construction, and the whole of the permanent-way materials in store are held by the construction department, so that if one of our gangers on the Canterbury Plains requires rails or sleepers for repairs, he makes out a requisition on his Sub-Inspector; next, the Sub-Inspector requisitions the Inspector; third, the Inspector requisitions the Resident Engineer of Constructed Railways; fourth, the Resident Engineer of Constructed Railways requisitions the Railway Storekeeper; fifth, the Railway Storekeeper requisitions the Public Works Storekeeper; sixth, the Public Works Storekeeper requisitions the Public Works Resident Engineer; seventh, the Public Works Resident Engineer requisitions the Inspector of Stores, Wellington. The next process is as follows:—Eighth, the Inspector of Stores authorizes the Resident Engineer of Public Works; ninth, the Public Works Resident Engineer authorizes the Storekeeper of Public Works; tenth, the Public Works Storekeeper authorizes the Railway Storekeeper; eleventh, the Railway Storekeeper authorizes the Inspector of Public Way; twelfth, the Inspector of Public Way authorizes the Sub-Inspector of Public Way; thirteenth, the Sub-Inspector of Public Way authorizes his ganger. I may mention that the result has been that the gangers take sleepers and rails and put them into the lines without authority, and it cannot be wondered at that they do so. I am not surprised. A rail may be wanted on an emergency, and they know where the rails are lying. They simply take them and put them in, and the consequence is, when stock is taken, they are in a muddle, because one department takes from the other without authority.

2186. *Mr. Macandrew.*] You do not mean it to be understood in the sense of the ganger taking material for himself?—He knows there is such a lot of time lost before he can get the material, that he prefers to run the risk of taking it without authority.

2187. *The Chairman.*] And how long does it take for this *modus operandi* to be performed?—I should say from two to three weeks.

2188. I want to ask you with regard to another question. Any imprests which are allowed you from the Colonial Treasury, are they not allowed to the General Manager in the South Island?—Yes.

2189. Until you account for that imprest, can you get your salary paid?—My own?

2190. Yes?—If there is any balance unaccounted for, they stop it. I have had it stopped once.

2191. Was that because you were behindhand in accounting for your sleepers?—Yes.

2192. Are there many of the salaries in the South Island paid from Wellington?—No; all from imprest. I have only two from Wellington direct.

2193. How long is that in force?

2194. Have you at any time since this Committee met had the day labourers paid by cheques from Wellington?—I have in Otago.

2195. And that has been changed lately?—Only two salaries are sent from Wellington, my own and another.

2196. Who is the other?—My clerk.

2197. But at one time even labourers were paid by cheque sent from Wellington?—Yes. Of course the cheques had to be countersigned by somebody else, after they got there; that is all abolished now.

2198. *Mr. Macandrew.*] Are the sleepers branded with a broad arrow?—Yes.