

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WEDNESDAY, 23RD AUGUST, 1899.—Mr. W. W. TANNER, Chairman.

Mr. CHARLES HENRY CARTER, called and examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] Mr. Carter, your name is Charles Henry?—Yes.
 2. You have been an engine-driver in the service of the New Zealand Railways?—Yes.
 3. You were the driver of a train that came into collision with another at Rakaia?—Yes.
 4. You have petitioned the House?—Yes.
 5. We shall be glad to hear any statement that you have to make on the subject. You are free now to make a statement in your own words.—I was dismissed on the 19th July, and I have a family of ten, eight of whom are not working. I have one boy now that is out of work a month on account of the business he is at being slack, and he being the youngest hand they have had to put him off; and, as for my future prospects, I cannot say much for them, or how I am going to bring my family up. Having been on the railways so long, I am out of touch with all outside work.

6. *Mr. Taylor.*] How long have you been on the railways?—Between twenty-four and twenty-five years. I am a very bad hand at explaining anything properly, not having had much schooling, but I will do my best to answer any question that you wish to ask me.

The Chairman: Under the circumstances, perhaps it would be best for Mr. Taylor to elicit the evidence himself.

7. *Mr. Taylor.*] How long have you been in the Railway service?—It is between twenty-four and twenty-five years.

8. Have you been driving the greater part of that time?—Yes.

9. Have you ever had any mishaps before?—No serious accidents, nothing like that one at Rakaia.

9A. What does your official record show? Any censure?—I have been fined once or twice, but there is nothing serious attached to it, through any accidents or bad management on my part.

10. When the Royal Commission sat to inquire into the cause of the accident, did you ask whether you should be allowed to have counsel?—Yes; I went up on the day it opened and asked them how I was going to be treated—as an ordinary witness, or should I want counsel?—and the Commissioners informed me that I would not need counsel, and would be treated as an ordinary witness. The next day they sat in the Chambers and had me on my trial again, and I could not get out the evidence that I would have liked to have got out. Had I been allowed counsel things would have been quite different.

11. Who gave evidence against you at the Royal Commission? Who gave evidence reflecting upon you?—Several gave evidence there.

12. Were you allowed to ask any questions?—Only through the Commissioners.

13. There is a statement here that on an occasion prior to this accident at Rakaia the Locomotive Superintendent tested the brake that was on the engine at the time of the accident. Can you tell the Committee what the circumstances were?—I took the engine to the shops to get altered. I had drawn attention to the tender air-brake. It would not go on. Mr. Beattie pulled the lever over underneath, and told me to go up and try it. The brake would not go on. Mr. Beattie went up and I watched to see if the brake went on, but it did not. I also drew Mr. Beattie's attention to the blocks, which made the grip very severe for picking the wheels up. The sand went round the tread of the wheels instead of into the blocks to take any slush off that might be on.

14. Perhaps Mr. Carter will explain to the Committee what he means with reference to these blocks?—This is what we call the slotted block. [Blocks produced before the Committee]. This fits on the outside of the tire. When the sand is put on the rails, instead of the sand coming along into the block this is still left greasy here, if it is bad weather. When the block goes on to the tire the sand goes around on the tread of the wheel. If the block had been solid (as this one is)—a block like this when it goes on the tire if there is any grease, the grease and the sand works up underneath and take all the stuff off the tire, and makes the brake grip better. But in bad weather that slotted block is too severe; instead of having power over the wheel it leaves it very smooth. It roughs the outside but leaves the tread of the wheel very smooth. When the brake goes on it picks up gradually. Instead of the power being right across it would have more of a grip over the tire. This is the bottom [referring to the solid block—witness indicating position on blocks to the Committee.]—when it goes on it is not so severe on the tire as these narrow parts in the slotted one are.

15. What is the width of the tire of the engine-wheel?—It fits between here [witness indicating position on the block to the Committee].

16. Is this a block of the class that was in use at the time of the accident?—Yes.

17. Have these others been substituted since?—Yes, directly afterwards.

18. Had you complained, prior to the accident, about these blocks?—Yes, I said I wanted solid blocks on my engine. Mr. Beattie said it would be seen to.

19. It was not seen to till after the accident?—I saw some solid blocks. They told me that they had some down in the workshop to put on.

20. Are you sure that none were put on till after the accident?—I believe there was one put on once, but I am not sure whether there were any on at the time of the accident.

21. About the Westinghouse brake: Had you at any time any instructions as to the peculiarities of the brake—any drawings?—No drawings or no instructions. I asked Mr. Dickenson if he knew anything at all about the interior of the brake, and he said he did not.