

902. And in selecting the four months of the year I suppose you took whatever four months you thought fit?—We took different four months in each year, so that we should be able to get a fair average. The figures did not vary very much for each month, as they had necessarily very limited storage accommodation.

903. *Mr. Bell.*] You have prepared a statement as to the amounts received from the mills during the last year: does it come from the railway books?—Yes. [Exhibit No. 9.]

904. The charge on the Brunner line includes the terminal charges at Greymouth, does it not?—It includes the haulage from Brunner to Greymouth, and possibly storage-accommodation here and placing it alongside the ship's side.

905. *The Chairman.*] Can you tell me whether the new scale is the scale for the carriage of timber throughout the colony?—It is the scale applicable to the Westland Section. The scale does apply to the timber-rates throughout the colony, as well as on this section.

906. It is lower on this section than anywhere else?—Yes.

907. You did not alter the Midland Railway charge for the carriage of timber until after the line became finally vested in the Government?—No, not till after the 27th August.

909. *Mr. Graham.*] As to the item, "Goods and stores for co-operative workmen": if it were possible to take four months in each year, to make it as fair as possible, will you tell us why it is not possible to give the figures for the whole year through? Could you give us the actual returns for 1897, 1898, and 1899?—Yes.

GEORGE VANDERPUT DRURY BUTTS examined on oath.

910. *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Butts?—Railway Workshop Foreman, residing in Greymouth.

911. *Mr. Bell.*] How long have you been Workshop Foreman?—Since May, 1894.

912. You held that office when the seizure took place on the 25th May, 1895, and also on the 23rd July, 1900, when the railway became vested in the Crown?—Yes.

913. Do you remember Mr. McIntosh making a report on the condition of the rolling-stock?—Yes.

914. Have you seen that report?—Yes.

915. By whom was it prepared?—I made out the substance of it. [Report handed in—Exhibit No. 10.]

916. You say that was prepared by Mr. McIntosh from information supplied by you, and you say that is accurate?—Yes.

917. Since 1895 have any repairs and improvements been made in the rolling-stock and engines?—Yes; improvements to the engines and brake-vans more particularly. The following is a list of improvements effected since 1895:—Locomotives: Sight-feed lubricator; metallic packing in piston-rods; cast-iron collar enlargements on trailing and bogie axles; new brasses cast in axle-boxes; cast-iron firebars replacing wrought-iron; standard blower; cow-catcher footsteps and hand-rails for convenience in shunting; bogie spring-brackets improved and strengthened on each engine; spring-gear compensated on two engines; cast-iron smoke-box, front and door on one ditto. Cars: All thoroughly overhauled and repainted, kerosene-lamps fitted. Brake-vans: Capacity of vans have been enlarged by taking in one platform in each; about 2 tons of ballast has greatly improved effective brake-power; brake-screws in place of chain and drum; postal boxes fitted, and internal fittings rearranged and improved.

918. Had the company any machinery at their Stillwater workshops?—One 8 in. screw-cutting lathe.

919. Any other machinery?—I believe they had machinery in connection with the maintenance department in one of the traffic department sheds.

920. When repairs were wanted to the engines where were they done—in the company's time?—The hand-labour repairs were done at Stillwater, and machinery repairs were done mostly at Greymouth, at the Government workshops.

921. In 1895, the engines and rolling-stock being in the condition reported, were any repairs done then to the engines and rolling-stock by the Government?—There were no repairs necessary before the engines could run; repairs were carried out as opportunity offered.

922. What condition was the rolling-stock in generally: did it require repairs more or less than ordinary rolling-stock?—I should say cars required more repairs, and the engines and brake-vans improvements to bring them up to the Government standard, but not so in connection with the wagon stock.

923. And since that the Railway Department has repaired them, has it not?—Yes.

924. And the rolling-stock to-day is much as it was eight months ago?—Yes.

925. *Dr. Findlay.*] You say that the repairs were very slight—that is, repairs required at the time when the Crown took possession in May, 1895?—Yes.

926. At that time the rolling-stock of the company was in good condition?—In fairly good condition.

927. The report which has been put into your hand is signed by Mr. McIntosh: did you supply the whole of the material in this report, or is any of it Mr. McIntosh's own?—I made out practically the whole of it.

928. It is dated July, 1895—that is, shortly after the seizure: it was about that time you supplied the material to Mr. McIntosh?—Yes.

HENRY EDWARD WHITFIELD examined on oath.

929. *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Whitfield?—Inspector of Permanent-way, residing at Greymouth.

930. *Mr. Bell.*] I think you were inspector of permanent-way under the company?—Yes.

931. And you were taken over by the Government on the seizure?—Yes.