

932. The permanent-way of the Midland Railway included bridges and buildings, did it not?—Yes; under the company they were under my supervision—the bridges and buildings as well as the permanent-way.

933. Under the Government you had only charge of the ordinary permanent-way?—Yes.

934. Do you remember a report being made by Mr. McIntosh shortly after the Government took possession?—There was a report drawn up. [Exhibit No. 12.]

935. Do you know who supplied the information to Mr. McIntosh?—Mr. McIntosh and I took a considerable time going through the sections.

936. What for?—He wanted the places pointed out.

937. Did you know he was preparing a report?—I had to give him all the information I could.

938. You went over the ground with Mr. McIntosh immediately after the seizure?—Yes; as soon as ever the line was seized I was notified to this effect.

939. You gave him all the information?—Yes.

940. *Dr. Findlay.*] What was your position under the company?—Inspector of permanent-way and bridges.

941. Did you know Mr. Musgrave?—Yes; he was locomotive engineer.

942. It would be his duty to know the condition of the rolling-stock?—Yes.

943. Do you know whether Mr. Musgrave made a report to the engineer-in-chief of the company?—Yes; but I am ignorant of that report.

944. Do you remember whether Mr. Musgrave spoke to you about the report he was preparing for the engineer-in-chief to get information from you?—I could not place that as a fact, but I know Mr. Musgrave was there; he was doing nothing else but reporting to Mr. Wilson.

945. You can tell us probably as well as anybody what was the condition of the permanent-way when the line was taken over by the Crown?—I was instructed to prepare a report on the condition of the road at the time the line was seized. My report is as follows:—

“When seized the track or permanent-way was in good running-order. On the top end of the Reefton Section ballast was required. Water-tables required cleaning up. With ballast-train: Banks wanted to be made up to standard. On the Brunner end to Nelson Creek, rail-beams of cattle-stops wanted renewing, and ballast required in several bad stacks; also banks wanted making up; private crossing not made in some cases; where made more ballast required.

“*Buildings.*—Station-building at Stillwater in good order; stationmaster’s house in good order; platelayer’s cottage—old building, been removed three times; cement-shed, temporary building; w.c., good order; engine-shed, good order; carriage-shed, good order; weighbridge office, new; blacksmith shop, good order; goods-shed, good order.

“No Town: Flag station, good order. Ngahere: Stationmaster’s house, good order; goods-shed, good order; station, good order. Ahaura: Stationmaster’s house, good order; platelayer’s cottage, good order; station-buildings, good order; goods-shed, good order. Raupo: Flag station, good order. Totara Flat: Station, good order; stationmaster’s house, good order; goods-shed, platelayers’ (two) cottages, good order; w.c. Ikamatua: Flag station, good order; platelayer’s cottage, good order; goods-shed, good order. Waimaunga: Flag station, good order; platelayer’s cottage, good order. Mawheraiti: Goods-shed, station, good order. Hinau: Flag station. Maimai: Flag station, good. Tawhai: Flag station, good. Reefton: Station-building, good; stationmaster’s house, good; ED house, good; G house, good; S house, good; engine-shed, good; goods-shed, good.

“*Jackson’s Section.*—Permanent-way in good running-order. Kokiri: Platelayer’s cottage, station, good order. Kaimata: Flag station, good order. Kotuku: Flag station, good order. Moana: Flag station, good order; platelayer’s cottage, good order. Te Kinga: Platelayer’s cottage, good order; flag station, good order. Poerua: Flag station, good; platelayer’s cottage, good order. Inchbonnie: Flag station, good. Jackson’s: Stationmaster’s house, good; station, good; engine-shed, been removed; huts (three), good.”

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WEDNESDAY, 13TH MARCH, 1901.

HENRY EDWARD WHITFIELD further examined on oath.

946. *The Chairman.*] You wrote that report five years after you reported on them?—Yes.

947. Is that your real recollection of the condition of the line?—That is to the best of my recollection.

948. Did you go along the line before you wrote that report?—I have been going along the line from the time of the seizure up to the present day.

949. Can you tell me the condition of the buildings, for instance, on the 23rd July, 1900?—There has been the natural depreciation. I was not inside the buildings.

950. What do you mean in your report by “good order”?—That is the usual good order; it is weather-tight.

951. Do you mean well painted and well preserved?—I mean so far as the age of the building is concerned.

952. I want you to say what you mean by “good order”?—Weatherproof and not requiring repairs, except painting.

953. Does that mean that, in your opinion, the buildings required painting a little over five years ago?—Yes. Of course, some of the buildings were old and some were new—some had been up about eleven years and some had only been up half and a third of that time.