

Mr. Conyers.  
15th Aug., 1877.

necessity required. I believe that the system of forms will work admirably well. I am strongly in favour of the monthly system, instead of the weekly system.

352. I would like to know if you would have a system of audit for the North Island and a system for the South, or one and the same system for both islands?—I think it would be well to have an Audit Office as near to the work as possible, in order that errors might be speedily corrected. If any Audit papers are, on arrival at head office, found incorrect, it takes considerable time to send them backwards and forwards for correction, and much delay arises in consequence. It would be an advantage to have a local Audit Office. It might be under the supervision of a Commissioner of Audit here (Wellington), and subservient to him. But I think the result would be better if the audit could be conducted as near the work as possible, and as centrally as possible. I would not recommend two systems—one for Otago and one for Canterbury; but one system of audit, and directly under the Commissioners of Audit. Under the present system there are certain calculations that have to be gone through four times in each month.

353. As to a Central Store Account the Railway Commission reported in favour of it. Is it not so?—Yes.

354. I suppose you remember exactly what was recommended?—Yes.

355. In connection with that part of the subject I will read to you the following: "With respect to the system of dealing with stores, we find that on the Canterbury and Otago lines no complete basis has been established in which inspection and accounts are combined. On the Northern lines the recommendations of the Commission on stores and workshops, stated in the report dated 23rd September, 1875, have been carried out, and generally it has been found that the system recommended works well." And the Commissioners state they have taken the whole question into consideration, and recommend that the Northern system, with certain modifications be adopted. Do you think it would be an advantage to have a Central Store Account?—I find nothing unsatisfactory under the present system. There is a Storekeeper in Christchurch, Dunedin, and Invercargill, and practically we have local stores, and the officers in charge of them deal with Wellington. I send in a requisition for stores to the Storekeeper. Should he have none of the goods in stock, he has power to get what-ever may be required.

356. Has he power to purchase without authority?—Yes.

357. Under whose control is the Storekeeper's department?—Under the Superintending Engineer.

358. Do you think there is any advantage in calling for tenders in England to supply railway material for the colony?—I do not think so; we must import a very large stock of material to meet the requirements of the railways, much of which might lie by for years. It is impossible to foresee exactly what would be actually required. By purchasing locally we keep the Suspense Account much lighter. To purchase from the Home country the Government would have to expend a large sum of money; everything would have to come direct from Home, or none at all.

359. Then you do not think it would be much of an advantage to obtain the supplies for the railway from Home?—No; it would, in my opinion, be injudicious, and would be found disadvantageous. It was tried in Victoria and given up.

360. I saw that some time ago ticket-sellers were placed on the line?—Yes.

361. There is no mention made of it in the report?—I do not remember. It was stated that these travelling ticket-sellers were on the Northern Railway lines worked by Mr. Passmore, but I opposed the idea.

362. Did you not appoint them on the line?—Yes, but I was instructed by the Engineer-in-Chief. His reason was that the guard should not leave the break-van to examine tickets, in case accident might happen in consequence of the guard's absence.

363. Then you think the travelling ticket-sellers were altogether unnecessary?—Yes; that is my opinion. As an experienced driver myself I should say, as a rule, the drivers do not rely upon the guards for assistance. Besides our speeds are very moderate, and the driver can very promptly stop the train in the case of danger.

364. Will you state to the Committee the amount paid to ticket-sellers on the railways in your district?—The annual amount paid in the Canterbury and Otago Districts is about £5,000.

365. With regard to the classification of merchandise or goods, a very elaborate classification has been made. Do you really think it is necessary?—The system is not nearly so elaborate as many. I thoroughly approve of the present system and the mode of classification. In England the classification is altered nearly every month. It is only by actual practice that the alterations required can be ascertained. If the classification bears hardly on a particular class of goods, it should be altered to meet the case. I believe in goods being carried by weight. We cannot carry furniture at the same price as iron, nor silk at the same rate as calico. The tariff varies according to the nature of the article, as carriage by rail is subject to the law relating to common carriers.

366. In Otago had you not a different schedule of charges?—We had different forms of classification there. Different rates were charged for general merchandise, bar iron, and for what is termed "outside traffic." But we had no elaborate system of classification.

367. You had the option of taking the goods by measurement or weight, had you not?—Yes, on the Port line; but in the country we carried things by weight. Furniture and light goods were carried by measurement, allowing 80 feet to the ton, and all other goods carried by actual weight.

368. And did you consider that system troublesome?—There was no trouble.

369. Suppose, for instance, under the present system, you were getting half-a-dozen different parcels forwarded by the same train?—The largest parcel would decide the class under which the others would be charged, then all would go as one lot.

370. You have had complaints about that method?—Yes, we had at first, but there are few complaints now. In the beginning many blunders were perpetrated; now that the method is better understood there are fewer complaints.

371. Do you now in Canterbury carry timber at the same cost to the consumer as elsewhere?—Yes.

372. Does not the consignor pay a great deal more?—All pay just the same.