

1880.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEFECTIVE RAILWAY WAGONS

(PAPERS RELATING TO).

Laid upon the Table by the Hon. Mr. Dick, with the leave of the House.

The ENGINEER IN CHARGE, Middle Island, to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

Public Works Office, Wellington, 21st July, 1880.

In accordance with your instructions, I have the honor to submit the following report with reference to the question of defective wagons on the Middle Island Railways.

ACCURACY OF FORMER STATEMENTS.

To me, the most important phase of the whole question is the serious reflections that have been cast on my veracity. I shall therefore refer to this point first, and show, in the most conclusive manner, that those reflections are perfectly groundless.

On the 29th June a question to be asked by Mr. Barron in the House was referred to me for report in the usual way; the question and my reply thereto being as follow:—

Question.—“Mr. Barron to ask the Minister for Public Works, with reference to the following portion of the Report of the Royal Civil Service Commission, page 6:—Wagons built by contract in Dunedin were delivered in Christchurch at the end of last year in a state thus described by a witness: “Some of these were disgraceful; bad workmanship, bad timber; the timber was unseasoned, stringy-bark was put in instead of iron-bark; the joints were not properly made. . . . Some of them had the bottom frames held up only by the nails in the flooring boards. . . . Some of them we have had almost to rebuild within six weeks””: (1) The name of the contractor for such wagons; (2) under the supervision of which department was the contract carried out, and who was at the time, and is now, the responsible head of that department; (3) who passed the work, and under whose certificate did the contractor obtain payment for such wagons?”

“Wellington, 29th June, 1880.

Reply.—“No wagons built by contract under this department at Dunedin were delivered in Christchurch at the end of last year, and I believe the same remark applies to the Railway Department. The last contract for wagons in Dunedin was finished in August, 1877, consequently they had been running for thirteen months before the line to Christchurch was opened, and nearly two and a half years before the date referred to. I may add that, so far as wagons built under the supervision of this department in Dunedin at any time are concerned, there is not the slightest ground for thinking them defective: they have in every instance been well made, with proper materials. As the proposition laid down in asking the questions is incorrect, they cannot, of course, be answered otherwise than as above.

“W. N. BLAIR,

“Engineer in Charge, Middle Island.”

Referring to this reply, the Chairman of the Civil Service Commission said, “The statements there made are, whether wilfully or carelessly so, every one of them incorrect.” My answer is simply that such is not the case, the statement made by me is true and correct in every particular; and I submit the following proofs in support of this assertion:—

A statement is enclosed herewith, certified to by the Accountant of this department, which shows,—

1. That there have been no wagons built by contract in Dunedin since August, 1877, the date given in my reply.
2. That the last deliveries of wagons built by contract anywhere south of the Waitaki were thirteen, delivered at Invercargill in July, 1878, six months before the through line to Dunedin was opened; and one wagon, delivered at the same place in July, 1879.
3. That the only other rolling-stock of any kind whatever, built by contract south of the Waitaki, delivered since the through line was opened, is six cattle and sheep trucks, and eight brake-vans, delivered in Invercargill between January and July, 1879.