

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to the NEW ZEALAND RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS.

Public Works Department, Wellington, 10th August, 1892.

Re Rolling-stock on opened Lines (Mr Sandford's Return).

Memorandum for the Railway Commissioners.

ON the above return being presented a few days ago exception was taken to it on the ground that it does not give any information whatever as to the quantity of rolling-stock sold, and the amount realised from the same. A motion referring the return back for further information would have been passed had I not undertaken, on behalf of the Commissioners, that further information would be given.

Even if the minute particulars as regards *parts* of engines and vehicles, mentioned on page 5 of the return, which I understand the mover does not press for under the circumstances stated, cannot be given, the Commissioners can doubtless give information as to the number of engines and vehicles sold whole, and the amounts received therefor. For example, I may mention the recent sale to the Western Australian Government, and other sales which are within the knowledge of members of the House.

I shall therefore be glad if the Commissioners will kindly have as full information as possible given under this head accordingly and let me have the return back, with the view of its being laid on the table of the House again at an early date.

R. J. SEDDON,
Minister for Public Works.

The NEW ZEALAND RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

15th August, 1892.

Rolling-stock on opened Lines (Mr Sandford's Return).

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works.

THE Commissioners have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th instant informing them that upon this return being presented exception was taken to it, and they have to thank you for giving them an opportunity for further explanation, and for suggesting further particulars.

The Commissioners, on page 5 of the return, which has been sent back, had already explained why it is not possible to answer the intricate and extensive question quoted on the margin of the same page. The gentleman asking the question has fallen into a very common error which it is difficult for persons not intimately acquainted with this branch of railway work to fully appreciate. He has supposed that each vehicle has, as it were, an individual existence, passing from infancy to old age, and final disintegration. Such is not the rule—the rolling-stock for the most part is made up of component parts for the most part interchangeable, and having different durations of life. Much pains have been taken by the engineers for many years past to apply this order of things as widely as possible. Individual parts exchangeable are such as wheels, axles, tires, draw-gear hooks, chains, axle-boxes, brasses, pads, springs, sole-bars, and other parts—such parts may from time to time be in running-stock or out of it. As each individual component part is worn out and withdrawn from use, it may be utilised as material for other work, either within or without the railways, or be again utilised for rolling-stock. Old cast-iron and steel are often supplied to the contractors to make new work, old wrought-iron is worked up under the hammer and turned out as new work—old brasses are melted down in the brass-foundry, and furnish new ones. Old timber may be utilised for work or for fuel, and on many occasions such old materials are sold with other, or are sold in the shape of new work.

In order to explain the extent of operations in the Government workshops, the following is a statement of the rolling-stock turned out of the shops during the past three financial years. Much of this has passed through the shops more than once during that period. There will, in addition, be stock in transit through the shops on the 31st March, 1892. There will, besides this, have been other work performed in the shops for the railways, other Government departments, and the outside public:—Engines and vehicles turned out of the railway workshops during the financial years 1890, 1891 1892 Engines, 40, vehicles, 11,657

It will readily be understood from the foregoing that no direct or approximate reply is possible to the first part of the question shown on page 5 of the return, demanding 'the numbers and descriptions of all classes of rolling-stock and engines sold, broken up or used up, laid aside as obsolete or useless, or otherwise disposed of.'

With reference to your suggestion that the Commissioners should state particulars of such wagons and engines as have been sold whole, as in the case of those sold to the Western Australian Government, the following table will, we hope, meet your wishes. In order to be quite clear on this point it should be understood that none of this stock was either wholly new or wholly old. The wagons sold to Western Australia, for example, comprised a great many new parts. The wagons sold to the Longburn, the Midland, and the Manawatu companies, and Nelsons, although they were specially built for the purchasers and were new stock, comprised old parts. The respective values of new and old work cannot be separated.

It will be understood also that, while the amount stated in the table below as "value" shows much value of new work and parts which had never before been in rolling-stock, it also omits a large amount of value of materials and parts asked for in the return which have passed into other work, sold and unsold, which there is no possibility of tracing. It will be understood from these remarks that, as explained in the return, it is impossible to answer the latter part of the return—namely to state "the amount derived from the sale or disposal thereof," and that the stock shown as sold does not necessarily bear any relation to the preceding tables of the return.