

123. Have the engines all a deflector-plate?—All that burn soft coal.
124. Soft coal sparks the most?—Yes.
125. And for those that burn hard coal?—They are supplied with a perforated plate with holes about  $\frac{1}{8}$  in. by  $\frac{3}{8}$  in.
126. Have you many complaints about fires, apart from these claims for damages?—No. This is about the second time I have heard of them since I have been in Southland.
127. How long have you been in Southland?—Nineteen years.
128. There was a claim for the destruction of a sawmill?—Yes.
129. How long ago?—Close on fifteen years ago.
130. What was the result of the claim?—I did not hear the result. There was a long litigation about it.
131. There are a lot of patents for spark-arresters?—Yes, several patents.
132. Have they been tried by the department?—We have tried three of them.
133. And were not satisfied with them?—No, we have never put them into use.
134. Were they too complicated, or not efficient?—They were not efficient. There was no possible chance of working them. With two of them we could not get steam in the engines. We could not raise steam with them.
135. They required a high pressure?—It was impossible to raise pressure with them under any condition.
136. That is the objection: the more effective the spark-arrester the less chance of getting up steam?—Yes.

### WOODEND.

TUESDAY, 30TH JANUARY, 1900.

ROBERT EUNSON, sworn.

1. *Mr. Poynton.*] What are you, Mr. Eunson?—A bush labourer.
2. What do you know of this matter? Mr. Williams wants you to speak of a previous fire to the fire that destroyed his house?—I was going from Woodend, and the 3 o'clock train passed me when down near Williams's house going to town. When I got down to Williams's house one of the sides of the roof was on fire in patches—patches were burning.
3. Did you put it out?—Yes.
4. With water?—Two or three buckets. It was a pretty dry time—I think it was in February.
5. Can you form an idea from the appearance of it how the fire started?—From the appearance of the house I blame the engine for doing it because I could not account for anything else doing it. The roof was on fire in five or six different places.
6. Close to each other?—Spots here and there all over the sides of the roof.
7. Did you observe whether there was any fire in the chimney?—I do not think there was any fire in the chimney, because it was the time when the children would not have any fire in the house; they were outside.
8. That was after Mrs. Williams's death?—Yes.
9. *Mr. Williams.*] Did you notice the direction of the wind?—I would reckon it about north-west.
10. If the fire had been in the house it could not have been from the chimney?—No, because the chimney was at the far end of the house, and the side burning was nearest the town.
11. *Mr. McCredie.*] Did you see any train pass?—I believe the train passed me about 500 or 600 yards on this side of the house. I had a wagon, and it took me a few minutes to get up to where the fire was.
12. The house was on fire when you got up to it?—Yes. If I had been ten minutes later I could not have put it out with the buckets of water.
13. How long was it from the time the train passed the house until you got there?—From five to seven minutes, or somewhere thereabouts.

MICHAEL KENEALLY, sworn.

14. *Mr. Poynton.*] What do you know of this matter, Mr. Keneally?—I do not know anything about Mr. Williams's fire.
15. Well, you have had some experience of the engine setting fire to the places here?—Yes. About the Saturday before New Year, twelve months ago, we had occasion to watch that night for Mr. Massey, the owner of the sawmill. In the afternoon of the same day the engine had set fire to the sawdust, and there were three men there—Young, Gordon, and myself. We were standing near together at the time. The engine started, and sparks that blew out of it lodged at our feet. We would be about three-quarters of a chain from the side of the line.
16. Did the sparks go out?—The fire was on previous to that. The sparks lodged at our feet. Before that there was no sign of a spark there.
17. Do you know for certain that the fire was set alight by the engine?—It must have been. I could not swear it was the engine that set fire to the sawdust.
18. *Mr. Williams.*] You know my place that was burnt down?—Yes, I was in it.
19. What sort of a place was it?—The building was very comfortable in the inside; it looked better inside. It was much the same as a workman's family house. If anything, it was more comfortable inside than the majority of them.
20. You were a surfaceman on the railway at one time?—Yes, I have been a good few years on the railway.