

130. Do you know whether any ballasting was done between May, 1895, when the Government took possession, and the date of your inspection in July last year?—Yes.

131. Do you know why that ballasting was done?—There had not been enough put on in the first instance.

132. Then, the line was not properly ballasted in the first instance?—It was bare of ballast—that is, as far as I can say. I was not there in 1895; I am speaking from what I saw in 1899. The line may have been fairly well ballasted, but the banks had settled down.

133. Who did the ballasting?—I do not know.

134. Since you first saw the line in 1899 has there been some ballasting done to it?—Yes.

135. To what extent?—I could not say exactly as to the quantity.

136. In the roughest way, what amount of money was spent in ballasting at that end?—I could not say; Mr. Richardson could give you an idea as to that.

137. Could you give any idea as to what it would cost to ballast the line now?—It would take close on 2,000 yards of ballast—I mean from Belgrove to Motupiko.

138. Do you know the part constructed by the company?—Yes.

139. Can you allocate the 2,000 yards, and tell us how much of the ballast would have to go to that piece?—Roughly speaking, about 1,000 yards. I am speaking now of the line from Belgrove to Norris's Gully.

140. What would the cost be on that piece of line with the facilities that are there?—It would cost from 2s. to 2s. 6d. a yard.

141. About £100 would do it?—Yes, about that.

142. You have no other fault to find with that piece of line?—The banks required widening and making up.

143. Is that from the wear-and-tear of time, or were they improperly constructed to begin with?—I could not say.

144. What would it cost to put the banks right?—About £200.

145. Then, £300 would put that piece of line in fairly good order?—Yes.

146. *Mr. Bell.*] You are an officer of the Working Railways?—Yes.

147. And the Public Works Department handed this piece of line over to the railways short of ballast?—Yes.

148. Is that a common complaint of the Working Railways against the Public Works Department?—I do not know, but it was so in this case.

149. Do you know when the Working Railways took it over?—I think, about March, 1899.

150. Then, with regard to the width of the banks, is the Public Works width different from the Working Railways?—14 ft. is the Working Railways width. I do not know that the Public Works make it so wide.

151. When the Order in Council was issued was the railway in the same condition as when you saw it last week?—Much the same; very little difference.

152. *The Chairman.*] If the Public Works Department handed over the line properly ballasted, and with the banks made up, would it have required more fixing in July, 1899?—The line required regauging in places; some parts of it were tight and some slack.

153. You say the Public Works Department handed over the line to the Railway Department in 1899?—Yes.

154. Supposing that line was handed over to the Railway Department in first-class condition as regards ballasting, &c., would there be any necessity to spend £200 on it, as you stated, a few months afterwards?—No, not so much.

155. Would it have wanted anything?—Not in that time; it is only a short time.

156. Are you aware that those banks had been formed before it was handed over to the Railway Department?—I do not know.

157. Supposing it had been formed seven or eight years before the permanent-way was laid, should there have been any settlement after that time?—In some cases it will settle down longer than that.

158. Would the settlement be of an extensive nature after being constructed for seven or eight years?—I should think not.

159. What condition was the rolling-stock in?—I had nothing to do with the rolling-stock.

160. *Mr. McKerrow.*] You said the line required regauging in some places: what did it cost?—5s. a chain, perhaps.

161. How many miles is it?—I suppose, seven miles.

162. That would be about £140 in putting it to gauge?—Yes. I may say that it is usual to go over the line after it is taken over from the Public Works Department and regauge it.

163. *Mr. Fraser.*] You said that out of the 2,000 yards it would require 1,000 yards from Belgrove to Norris's Gully and 1,000 yards from Norris's Gully to Motupiko: the distances are not equal?—The line is bare of ballast from Norris's Gully to Motupiko.

GEORGE EDWARD RICHARDSON examined on oath.

164. *The Chairman.*] You are District Engineer, residing at Westport?—Yes.

165. *Mr. Hudson.*] When did you leave Nelson for Westport?—13th May, 1900.

166. And when did you go to Nelson in the first instance?—9th February, 1897.

167. You were in charge continually from one date to the other?—Yes.

168. Then, you were in charge at the time the railway was handed over by the Public Works Department to the Railway Department—I think, on the 1st March, 1899?—Yes.

169. Can you state the condition of the line and rolling-stock at that time?—The rolling-stock was all new at that time. There were ten L wagons and two K wagons, all new. They were in perfect running-order.

170. Were there any tarpaulins on the line belonging to the company?—Ten.