

It is manifest that a great advantage already accrues to Lyttelton-Christchurch from the operation of the port rates; and, in connection with the demand for a further concession, three questions arise, namely:—

- (a.) Is it to be affirmed as a policy that all rates must be uniformly fixed for all distances; that therefore the lowest rate must be the highest; and that geographical advantages, disadvantages, or outside competition are not to justify any departure from uniform rating?
- (b.) Would the consumer be benefited by any possible reduction in the rates operating between Lyttelton and Christchurch, in view of the fact that the total rate, 4s. 3d. per ton, represents a charge of barely $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per pound for seven miles of railway journey?
- (c.) Having due regard to the interests of the community as a whole, would a reduction of rate on one particular section of the Canterbury railways—viz., the Christchurch-Lyttelton line—be justifiable?

The reply is obvious.

The function of railways is to enable the man at a long distance from the market to get his produce to and supplies from that market with expedition and at a reasonable charge. It would be impossible to fulfil that end and at the same time adopt the theory propounded by Canterbury. To follow this out to a logical conclusion would, as already shown, result in an increase of rates on the Lyttelton-Christchurch line, which, if the actual business were taken as a basis, would give a return of more than £10,000 per annum over and above the present revenue. It is presumed that the Canterbury people would not desire an alteration of this kind, and that, as they have recently abandoned the theory that a large portion of the port rates was due to the existence of the Lyttelton tunnel, they will now abandon the theory propounded by themselves that the Lyttelton rates should be computed on the basis of the average for the other three ports.

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