

144. You have said that the salaries of the railway employes were not reduced by 10 per cent., as was the case in other departments?—I have explained that the management of the railway was conducted in an extremely loose manner. The 10-per-cent. reduction did not affect the Railway Department as a whole.

145. You say that another scale has been adopted since 1880, which is not detrimental to the employes?—Yes.

146. *Mr. J. Buchanan.*] Of course, the men who went into the Railway Department were aware, before they joined, that they would be subjected to irregular hours?—Yes; and even with that understanding men are anxious to get into the service.

147. What length of notice is required from the men who wish to resign?—A fortnight's notice on either side.

148. Consequently, these men who are employed by the Railway Department are in no way different from sailors and other men who take engagements knowing that they will have to serve at irregular hours?—No; I do not consider that they are worked harder than nine-tenths of the colonists are.

149. Do you not, as General Manager of the railways, recognize the importance of having the best men you can get?—Yes.

150. You have already admitted that, for the safety of the public, your men should not be kept too long at work?—Yes.

151. Do you work horses in connection with the railway?—Yes, shunting.

152. Do the men who are working those horses see that they are fed, &c.?—I cannot say. We have only a few horses, and they are looked after by the local officers.

153. *Mr. Levestam.*] Will you see that in future the scale is framed and put in some conspicuous place, where the men can see it?—I will not undertake to do that unless the scale is gazetted.

154. *The Chairman.*] You say that the rules are made without authority?—They have the Minister's authority, which is given under the Public Works Act.

155. Are we to understand that if a man does his work well he will continue to be employed by the Railway Department?—Yes, certainly.

156. And how is he paid—wet days and dry days?—Yes.

157. Do you think that the men who act as platelayers are paid as well as if they were working for somebody outside the Government?—Yes.

158. Have you any difficulty when you want to get good men, to fill up vacancies?—No; when the strike occurred in Christchurch last year, we had more applications than we wanted.

159. Then you think that with the present rate of wages you can get good men to work for you?—Yes.

160. Do the men as a rule complain that they are underpaid as compared with the men outside?—No. The clerical staff is not too highly paid; in fact, I think they are not paid enough; but all the other employes are well paid.

161. Then you think that the wages paid at present are sufficient?—Yes.

162. *Mr. White.*] Do you not consider that the engine-drivers are the best you can get in the colony?—Yes.

163. Do the platelayers get paid on wet days?—Yes; but they have to be present on the line.

164. Do you not think the clerks of the department are underpaid?—Yes; but there are a great many applications from persons who would be willing to fill the positions.

APPENDICES.

REPORT OF MR. MAXWELL ON THE PETITION OF THE LOCOMOTIVE DRIVERS AND FIREMEN OF THE HURUNUI-BLUFF SECTION, NEW ZEALAND RAILWAYS.

THE petition is signed by 135 hands of the Locomotive Department. One of these is from a man who has left the service, and thirteen of them are from hands temporarily employed as firemen, leaving 121 legitimate petitioners.

There are about 280 drivers and firemen on the New Zealand Railways.

The petition cannot conveniently be treated alone and without regard to collateral circumstances.

The petitioners represent a portion of a particular class from a body of some 3,600 railway employes.

Enclosure 1.

They are paid under a scale, a copy of which is attached; they are the best paid class of men, as a whole, in the service. The chief objects of the petitioners appear to be to obtain more pay and shorter hours.

The wages-question affects the employes as well as the economical results of the railway-working. At this particular juncture several matters have to be considered in dealing with a petition involving an increase in wages.

A large body of the railway hands has just been granted an increase in the rate of wages; concurrently there is a large body of mechanics and artisans who will doubtless also claim a higher rate of pay in the same way as the petitioners have done.

On the other hand, a large section of the public is urging for heavy reductions in railway rates for grain, minerals, and timber. The increased rates of wages which may be demanded, and the diminutions