

* REMARKS OF THE LOCOMOTIVE SUPERINTENDENT ON THE PETITION OF DRIVERS AND FIREMEN, HURUNUI-BLUFF SECTION.

1. The original petition bearing the signatures of the men appears to have been forwarded in an irregular manner, and in breach of Rule 17, which must have been well known to the petitioners. As the original petition has not been forwarded to me I cannot report on the authenticity of the document, but I am in a position to say that, from what I can learn from men who did not sign, there are about two-thirds only of the hands who subscribed, and many of these only appended their names because they did not like to stand against the pressure brought against them by their fellow-workmen.

2. The two previous petitions to the Minister were forwarded by me through the proper channel with the least possible delay, and the letters that accompanied them are doubtless attached to the documents in the record office.

3. *Time*.—The nature of the time-table, which is framed to suit the public convenience, makes it imperative that some men shall work long hours, some the standard of ten hours, and some very short hours. To prevent any injustice it has been the practice to change the runs of the men periodically, but, as a matter of fact, the men who are on the long runs prefer to stick to them rather than change, because they draw more money at the end of the month in the shape of overtime. The Locomotive Foremen, who are old drivers, promoted for good conduct and ability, recommend the amount of overtime to be allowed, but this recommendation is always strictly scrutinized in the office, and revised if thought to be unfair. One and two hours' overtime only is allowed in a good many cases where men are out about fourteen hours, but in these cases the men are off duty for four or five hours in the middle of the day. Of course they are occasionally called upon to work during that time or part of the time, but in that case they are allowed pay for the extra duty.

Shunting is an intermittent service, and men do not get overtime unless they work over eleven hours, because we reckon an hour off at least in the period for meals; on the contrary, men are frequently at work on shunting engines *only seven or eight hours*, but they always receive the full ten-hour day's pay. Ballast-men have comparatively easy work, and work rather less, than more, than ten hours per day on the average.

Nearly all overtime is worked regularly day by day, but occasionally, in busy times, it is necessary to send out men for an extra trip after their day's work. This is no doubt undesirable, but it is inseparable from the conditions of the working of all railways, and cannot be entirely avoided. In New Zealand there is very little ground for such a complaint.

The "fair-day's pay for the fair-day's work," which the men explain as "the whole time on duty to be considered," is really the groundwork of the whole petition. They want to be paid for the time from first coming on duty in the morning till leaving off at night, irrespective of the amount of work done during the time; or, in other words, the man who runs, say, a morning train out, and has several hours idle time in the middle of the day, wishes to receive the same amount of pay that a man who does double the work receives, because, from starting in the morning till leaving at night, he has been as long away from home, without any consideration for the amount of work performed. My analysis of the train-runs mentioned by the petitioners is given herewith.

4. *Standing Time*.—Twenty minutes is ordinarily sufficient for the duties enumerated in this clause. When an engine is standing for any length of time, it is almost invariably in a shed, and the men are then at liberty to leave, and as a matter of fact do leave till time to prepare for the return trip. A few copies of ordinary sheets as returned by drivers are attached, to let it be understood what duties the haulage-sheets involve: they are sheets for ordinary main-line runs. Men are never fined except in cases of downright carelessness. On all railways of any importance the men have to keep running-sheets. Thirty minutes is a fair average time to get the engines ready; in some cases it may take a little more, in others a little less. The fireman is paid for all the time he works, the same as the driver. The statement of the English practice is incorrect, and does not affect our regulations.

Enclosure 1.

RULES.

5. In some cases engines have to run tender first. This cannot always be avoided on *any* railway, and as our turning appliances are improved the necessity for doing this will be reduced. No man is ever blamed for what is not his fault.

Complete sets of tools are provided for all engines, but they are frequently carelessly lost or destroyed. Drivers are instructed before taking charge of a strange engine to overhaul the tool-boxes, and report to their foreman any tools that are missing; in the event of his having done so, he is relieved of responsibility. No matter by whom it is done, the boilers are always washed out by competent persons weekly. Sometimes a regular train not being required, the men are booked off duty. This may be said to balance the extra duty that is done when specials are required. As men get paid for working extra trains, they cannot expect to be paid when not working at all as well.

As there are no shops available for the men to work in, we cannot employ them in the shops, and their services would be of little or no value in the shops, because they are not trained mechanics.

Re Signals.—The statement is incorrect.

Removing.—Although not obliged by rules to consider the convenience of the men in the matter of locating them, their wishes and interests are studied to a great extent by the department. Indeed, the service could be improved by making more such changes.

Scale of Pay.—This, with the question of paying for standing time, is the real grievance of the men, but in my own opinion this is the only *just* cause of complaint. In 1877, on taking charge as Locomotive Engineer in Canterbury, I found no regular scale being worked to, and I posted a notice, founded on the regulations framed by the late Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. Carruthers (a copy of which is attached), allowing the drivers to commence at 11s., and after four years' service, with clean conduct-sheets, to rise to 13s. per diem. The scale has been altered three times since then, and has practically reduced the rate of pay 1s. per diem. The Locomotive Superintendent does not allow whims or caprices to guide him in the discharge of his duties, and no man is ever fined unless for glaring negligence or disobedience.

Enclosure 2

* This report was called for at the request of the Committee after Mr. Maxwell's examination.