

RAILWAY EMPLOYÉS.

(CORRESPONDENCE WITH AMALGAMATED SOCIETY OF RAILWAY SERVANTS RESPECTING CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT, &c.)

Laid on the Table by the Hon. Mr. Fergus, with the Leave of the House.

No. 1.

The AMALGAMATED SOCIETY of RAILWAY SERVANTS to the RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS.

Amalgamated Society New Zealand Railway Servants,
GENTLEMEN,— Central Office, Hereford Street, Christchurch, 29th March, 1890.

In accordance with the resolutions passed at the late conference of delegates from the various branches of the above-named society, the Executive Committee respectfully beg leave to bring under your notice the following facts in connection with the railway employés, and to submit to your favourable consideration certain proposals bearing thereon, namely,—

BOY-LABOUR.

The Executive Committee would draw your attention to the fact that the excessive employment of boys and youths under twenty-one years of age, as apprentices and at unskilled labour, will necessarily prevent adults from finding that amount of employment which is essential to the well-being of the community; it will gradually, but surely, reduce the wages, and throw a number of men who are now employed on the railways out of work. To obviate the possibility of such a result, the committee are compelled to ask that you will limit the proportion of boy-labour to adult-labour on the following scale:—

Apprentices.

For all kinds of mechanics and artisans except boilermakers, one apprentice to each department or shop, and an additional apprentice for every four journeymen employed. For boilermakers, one apprentice and one rivet-heater for every four journeymen employed. And that in no case more than one improver to every four journeymen employed in any one department or shop.

Unskilled Labour.

One boy or youth under twenty-one years of age to every four men employed at full wages: this to apply to porters, shunters, platelayers, workshop labourers, goods-shed men, and all other unskilled labour employed on the New Zealand railways excepting engine-cleaners, regarding whom the committee would impress on you the fact of the unhealthy nature of their employment, and request you to so fix the age at which they are employed as to reduce the risk of their general health being impaired to the minimum. The committee also wish to direct your attention to the fact that it is desirable to prohibit any person from doing any shunting unless he has been three years in the service or is over twenty-one years of age.

Cadets.

It is deemed necessary that there shall be not a greater number of cadets in the service at any time than one to every three Stationmasters and clerks, and that any person having served five years as a cadet shall be rated as a clerk, and receive his yearly increase of salary accordingly.

2. HOURS OF LABOUR.

In accordance with resolutions passed at the conference, the Executive Committee would respectfully point out that the hours of labour per diem in some departments are extremely excessive, such as engine-drivers, firemen, guards, porters, shunters, signalmen and others, some of whom are working fourteen, sixteen, and even eighteen hours per day without adequate remuneration. As this is highly injurious morally and physically to those so employed, and not at all conducive to the safety of the travelling public, it is deemed necessary to submit to you the following proposals for your approval: That no employé on the New Zealand railways shall work more than eight hours per diem, or forty-eight hours per week, excepting where absolutely necessary; and that all time worked over such forty-eight hours in any one week shall be paid for at overtime rates of time and a quarter for the first four hours over and above eight worked in one day, time and a half for all time worked over and above that, and time and a half for Sunday work; providing always that no overtime shall be paid for time worked in excess of eight hours in any one day unless the whole of the time for the week amounts to more than forty-eight hours.

The committee are anxious to impress you with the necessity of this reform, and also with the desirability of employing additional labour when required, instead of compelling men to work long hours at overtime rates; and that no man should be called upon to resume duty after a day's work unless he has had an interval of at least eight hours off, except in cases of urgent necessity.