

The Railway Commissioners are therefore of opinion that the railway servants, on whose behalf you are engaged to write, should send representative members who are themselves railway servants to Wellington, who can fully set forth and discuss such matters as they desire.

The Railway Commissioners will give careful consideration to any representations they may make, and will, as previously indicated to you, facilitate such a meeting upon application to do so.

In any case, the matters you have referred to will receive careful consideration from the Commissioners.

I have, &c.,

E. G. PILCHER, Secretary.

The Acting General Secretary, Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants,
Hereford Street, Christchurch.

No. 7.

The AMALGAMATED SOCIETY of RAILWAY SERVANTS to the RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS.

SIRS,—

Canterbury Chambers, Hereford Street, Christchurch, 8th May, 1890.

I have the honour, by instructions of the Executive of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of New Zealand, to acknowledge receipt of your communication of the 3rd May, No. 1,726.

In reply, I beg to inform you that the society is formed for the purpose of protecting the interests and bettering the condition of all classes of railway servants in New Zealand, irrespective of any Acts of Parliament. Taking for granted that the Act of 1887 regulates the duties of the Commissioners, then it is evident, judging by facts, that that Act provides for the introduction of excessive boy-labour, to the terrible risk of railway-men and the general public; it provides for an indirect reduction of wages, and it must be apparent that a reduction of wages in so large a Government department will act as a precedent in reducing wages generally throughout the colony; it provides for the iniquitous system of piecework, even to the disgraceful extent of compelling men on day-wages to work with those who are given labour on piecework; it provides for the maintaining of excessively long hours of labour and the non-payment for overtime, the utter disregard of an impartial and just system of promotion, the illegal extortion of the hard-earned wages of the railway-men in the name of fines; it provides, in short, for the demoralisation of the service; and, as the object of the society is to abolish these things, and bring about a better condition of service for the humanity employed in railway-working, its operations must to a certain extent be contrary to the spirit of the Act of 1887, in so far as that Act affects the social condition of the employés.

Honorary members are admitted into the society, but have no vote upon any question whatever with regard to the society. Although such would not be amenable to "The Government Railways Act, 1887," in such a way as an ordinary railway employé might be, yet the majority of the honorary members of this society are directly responsible for the economical conduct of the public services upon just and fair lines, in that they are members of the House of Representatives.

Relative to the suggestion that a conference of representatives of the society (themselves being railway servants) should meet in Wellington, I have to state that the Executive Council does not see the necessity of such special conference in face of the general conference held in February last, and again to be held in February, 1891, at Auckland.

No reply having been so far received to the communication dated from here 29th March last, dealing with the questions of boy-labour, apprentices, unskilled labour, cadets, hours of labour, piecework, &c., together with the communication of the 21st April, I have the honour to ask that those communications be replied to definitely by the 18th of the present month.

I have, &c.,

W. J. EDWARDS, General Secretary, A.S.R.S.

The Commissioners of New Zealand Railways, Wellington.

No. 8.

The RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS to the AMALGAMATED SOCIETY of RAILWAY SERVANTS.

SIR,—

13th May, 1890.

I have the honour, by direction of the New Zealand Railway Commissioners, to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 8th May, in further reference to the constitution and objects of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, and am desired to express regret that the suggestion made in my previous letters of the 21st April and 3rd May, to send representative members of the railway service to Wellington to discuss with the Commissioners personally such matters as it is desired to bring forward, has not met with the concurrence of your Executive.

I have, &c.,

E. G. PILCHER, Secretary.

The General Secretary, Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, Christchurch.

No. 9.

The AMALGAMATED SOCIETY of RAILWAY SERVANTS to the RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS.

SIRS,—

Christchurch, 16th May, 1890.

In reply to your communication of the 13th May, I am instructed by the Executive of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of New Zealand to inform you that it is impossible for the Executive to alter the constitution, and objects of the society, as laid down by the recent conference held in Christchurch. It therefore declines to hold a general conference in Wellington, and refers the Commissioners to the conference to be held in Auckland in February, 1891.