

"The Commissioners desire to remind all their employés that the only condition on which they can be employed as public servants on the Government railways is that they strictly obey the rules and regulations made under the authority of the laws of the colony.

"Those employés who cannot conscientiously continue to obey the rules are advised to give notice in a proper and orderly manner and to resign their places.

"Those who, as heretofore, do their duty as public servants faithfully and loyally, will have the entire support and assistance of the Commissioners in any difficulties which may arise.

"JAS. MCKERROW,

"J. P. MAXWELL,

"W. M. HANNAY,

"Railway Commissioners."

"Officers in Charge will please supply a copy of this to each employé, obtain receipts, and send them to their District Officer."

This circular was followed up by an order which required that the four employés who were specially counselling the others to disobey should give an undertaking to refrain from doing so in the future.

The men preferred to take their discharge to pledging themselves as required.

The following is a report of the proceedings :—

Christchurch, 10th September, 1890.

Yesterday morning, in consequence of instructions received from the Railway Commissioners, Messrs. Elvines, Owen, Winter, and Newton, who are prominent members of the Railway Servants' Association, were called upon to attend before Messrs. Gaw (Traffic Manager), Burnett (Resident Engineer), and Ronayne (Locomotive Superintendent), in connection with the action taken by them at a meeting of the association held in Christchurch on the 3rd September, in proposing and seconding resolutions, and making speeches, inciting other employés to disobey the orders of the Commissioners. The proceedings were reported in the papers of the 4th September.

On the men attending at the Traffic Manager's office, Mr. Gaw said he would first read the telegram which had been sent by the Commissioners. It was as follows :—

"The Commissioners direct that Messrs. Winter, Owen, Elvines, and Newton are to be summoned to attend before yourself and Messrs. Burnett and Ronayne for the following action, viz.: The second resolution proposed by Mr. Winter at a public meeting, as reported in the *Press* newspaper of the 4th instant, in reference to the approval of the strike of the employés of Westport and Lyttelton is to be read over to them. They are to be informed as follows :—

"That it appears to the Commissioners that they have been urging other employés to disobey the Commissioners' commands, and to refuse the duties required of them, provided by the rules and regulations under which they are engaged.

"That many employés have been incited to acts of disobedience, through which they have lost their places.

"That, while the Commissioners do not wish to interfere with the union or with the free discussion of grievances, they cannot permit any employés to be parties to countermanning their orders, as to advising other employés to disobey their commands.

"That they must undertake to unreservedly obey the rules and regulations as required, and to abstain from counselling disobedience to orders, or the neglect by any employé to perform the duties required by him in the public service.

"That, if they are not able to sincerely and conscientiously undertake this, they should resign their places, failing which they should receive notice of discharge."

He then read the resolutions proposed by Mr. Winter at the meeting referred to, expressive of sympathy with the strikers at Westport and at Lyttelton, which were as follow :—

"(1.) That the executive and the railway-men in general regret very much the action taken by the Commissioners of literally forcing the men into taking steps at the present juncture which may probably end in a general strike by taking platelayers and others from their ordinary work and coercing them into doing the work of those wharf-labourers who have at present withdrawn their labour, thereby constituting them blacklegs and demoralising the society.

"(2.) That this meeting express its unqualified approval and admiration of the manner in which the men now out on strike both here and at Westport have responded to the call of the executive, and pledges itself to come out to a man, if called upon, either to assist in terminating the present struggle or to force the reinstatement of the men now out."

Mr. Gaw then read the speeches of Messrs. Newton, Elvines, and Winter at the same meeting, which appeared in the *Press* on the 4th September.

Mr. Elvines said that it appeared to him that, because they spoke at a meeting of the railway-servants on the position, they were to be dismissed.

Mr. Gaw said that that was not so. The reason was that they had incited men to disobey the orders of the Commissioners, and to refuse the duties required of them under the regulations. He now asked them which of the courses mentioned in the telegram they were prepared to take.

Mr. Elvines wanted to have the matters referred to by Mr. Gaw in writing.

Mr. Gaw said he could not do this. He would read the telegram over to them as many times as they liked, so that they should understand it.

Mr. Elvines continued to urge the right of the men to a circular on the matter.

Mr. Owen asked for time to consider their position.

Mr. Elvines pointed out that they had been summoned there at a moment's notice, without knowing what they were wanted for.

Mr. Gaw then put a plain question to them. He said all that was wanted was a plain answer.

Mr. Owen said it seemed to him that it meant that if they wished to stick to the service they must give up being union men.