

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, 27TH SEPTEMBER, 1892.

Mr. Ross examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] Have you anything you desire to add to the petition—in support of it, Mr. Ross?—The only thing I have in support of it is contained in the papers which I have here. [Papers handed to Chairman, *vide* Appendices A to L.]

2. I do not think there is anything to answer in the shape of allegations against your character, Mr. Ross: the only thing you have to show is that you come under the Civil Service Act, and are therefore entitled to compensation?—I should be most happy to give an outline of things as they happened from the very beginning, if not taking up too much time. I have a document from the Railway Manager (Mr. G. Ashcroft), showing when I was appointed locomotive foreman.

3. *Mr. Joyce.*] What salary were you getting?—Four pounds ten shillings per week. [Statement of the Officer in Charge referred to handed in, *vide* Appendices L and M.]

4. *The Chairman.*] There is no question as to your character at all; that is not challenged in any shape or form—the question is one simply as to your position as a foreman, and whether you were under the Civil Service Act?—The middle of that paper states that.

5. Nobody raises any question as to your ability, or to the different positions you occupied; the contention is that you were not a Civil servant, and not entitled to compensation until you got the later appointment?—My appointment has been as locomotive foreman since 1879.

6. Have you got your appointment in 1879?—The books were never made up. The service register of this section has only been made up by the present clerk some time about two and a half years ago, it was never made until the present Superintendent took charge. After he took charge, they were put on a fair footing. When I was first engaged I was brought to Cross Creek by Mr. Blackett and the District Manager, not as fireman or driver, but as foreman in connection with that section, doing everything outside stationmaster's work—distributing trucks, and working the traffic through. [Report from Head Office, Wellington, dated 22nd September, 1892, read by the Clerk, *vide* Appendix M.]

7. *The Chairman.*] You see, Mr. Ross, the question of retiring compensation is not fixed by the Railway Commissioners: it is fixed by the Audit Department. You are aware of that?—I am of opinion that the Railway Commissioners would not deprive me of any benefit.

8. The compensation was fixed then at £56 6s. 2d., as to the 27th January, 1889, and unless you can give us anything to show that you have received an appointment which will bring you under the Civil Service Act prior to that date, I do not know what we can do.

Mr. Harkness: What constitutes an appointment?

The Chairman: It must be made under the Act, I presume.

Mr. Joyce: No; scarcely.

9. *Mr. Harkness* (to witness)] : You appear to have joined in August, 1875?—Yes.

10. And left on 23rd September, 1891?—Precisely so.

11. Was there no break in your service?—No.

12. You simply commenced at a low step, if I may put it that way, and worked your way up the ladder?—I gave up my position as engineer of my own steam-boat to take service at 8s. a day on a locomotive. I told the master of the vessel to get an engineer to take my place, and I got nothing by that transaction. When I was wired to by the District Manager I accepted the foremanship at Cross Creek.

13. *Mr. Meredith.*] That would be Rimutaka?—Yes.

14. *Mr. Joyce.*] Where is Mr. Ashcroft now?—I really could not say. The last I heard of him he was in Sydney.

15. He is out of the service?—Long ago. There is nothing to show my appointment as locomotive foreman at all; I want to bring out the facts.

16. Was it because you were locomotive foreman that you got the compensation for the two and a half years?—Yes.

17. Mr. Ashcroft says you held the same appointment; he was then Railway Manager?—Yes; and he was the gentleman who gave me the appointment. If there is no record of my appointment in the official books, it is surely not fair to make me responsible for that.

18. Have you any appointment showing that you were locomotive foreman during the last two and a half years?—That is the only one. [Document produced, *vide* Appendix K.]

19. *Mr. Joyce.*] “Mr. T. Ross has been appointed running foreman in lieu of Mr. Jackson, and will commence his duties on the 25th proximo.” What is the meaning of running foreman?—Foreman of all locomotives running on that section, placing each gang and engine every day for train duty; receiving coal from ships and delivering it to the various departments; receiving stores and delivering to the drivers; and making out the official returns in connection with the work.

20. What duty had you been discharging prior to this date?—Precisely the same duty, with the addition that I had the whole of the locomotive repairs to attend to at Cross Creek; I had a workshop there, and had to work the whole of the traffic north of Summit. At that time the District Manager upon this side of the Summit and myself upon the other worked the traffic through.

21. This authority, then, is simply an extension of your duty as locomotive foreman?—

22. *Mr. Harkness.*] What was the salary?—The salary was fixed at £4 10s.

23. *Mr. Joyce.*] What had you been receiving prior to this date?—13s. a day, and, owing to the long hours, the District Manager allowed a certain sum under the head of overtime. The then Commissioner (F. B. Passmore, Esq.) would not permit any rise to anybody.