

Now let us see what you can make of it." I was given full control of the traffic as the line was extended, and a nice workshop was fitted up at the bottom of the hill at Cross Creek to enable me to do all locomotive and other repairs that were necessary. I had to attend to the working traffic night and day—to send engines away, and so on—and do my best for the traffic there, which was somewhat blocked. I had to arrange for all specials, when necessary, passenger and goods-trains, and to place trucks where required by the traffic officers. I did all and sundry work outside a stationmaster's duties. When the line became broken away, I had full permission, and was requested, if possible, to repair the damage and get the traffic through by any means at my hand. I have done this on many occasions, even to the extent in one instance of working on a Sunday, when the line became washed away two miles on this side of Featherston. The line was washed away there by storm-water, and the rails were hanging like a suspension bridge. This would stop the traffic on the following day. I collected the platelayers and my own staff, and got the material ready and erected a bridge, which carried the traffic over for some two or three days afterwards. This was done with the full approbation of my superior officers. During the whole of the mishaps on the section, which were somewhat numerous, from 1879 to about 1882, there was no day on which we did not get the mail through. On several occasions we did not succeed in getting the trains through, but we managed to tranship the mails. The work of the road was always done in a cheerful manner, and our efforts were frankly met by the public in response, and no complaints were made. Afterwards I had to find out, by instructions, the best mode of working the incline economically, &c. I tried almost every experiment I could think of for the placing of power-engines in front, engines behind, and engines in the middle, showing the results. And, owing to the crooked nature of the road and grade, some of the experiments were certainly interesting. Reports of these have been sent in to the Manager's Office in the usual way, and no doubt are to be found yet. Numerous obstacles presented themselves which very few could have imagined at the beginning. It is only by experiments that these things can be brought to light. However, matters went on satisfactorily after a time. In 1886 I was promoted running foreman for the whole section. There is a statement in the official notice to me to that effect, the words, "whole of the line" being made special use of to illustrate that I have been in the capacity before, but with jurisdiction extended. That is my contention, and it is very clear. I was removed from Cross Creek to Wellington, and from that day resided here. In September, 1891, I severed my connection with the department, after having previously ascertained in the usual way the compensation that would be due to me in the event of my leaving the department. This compensation was paid, £55 6s. 2d., for service as foreman for two years and 302 days, up to the date the Commissioners took office. That being so, it points to the fact that the word "foreman" is in itself understood to be the means of carrying the compensation. "Leading driver" is a term new to me. It has only been used in the service a year or two. That and several other alterations came into force a few years ago. I am not aware that the term "leading driver" has ever been applied to me before. I have been a fitter and driver in Nelson, and acted as such for some time, and know the mechanical work in the place. I never heard the term "leading driver," applied to me on the Wellington Section until this morning. I have it in writing from the District Railway Manager, Mr. Ashcroft, that I have been locomotive foreman under him for seven years. Mr. Ashcroft was the gentleman who gave me my appointment as far as I know. He was the one who telegraphed to Nelson asking me if I would accept the position of foreman of the incline. There is a book in the service called the "Service Register." It is just possible that that book would throw some light on my appointment. In my capacity of locomotive foreman this book was in my possession repeatedly, for the official purpose of entering the names of new employés. I have not seen my name in connection with "leading driver" entered in that book; there was no mention made of it. In 1879 that book will show my appointment as foreman of the incline. There is no hitch whatever in that transaction. That will corroborate Mr. Ashcroft's statement in writing. I have put my case pretty plainly, and do not wish to occupy the time of the Committee. I have no grievance beyond wishing to establish my right as an officer of the Government to whom compensation is due as from the periods mentioned. I leave myself in the hands of the Committee to do justice on that point.

*Mr. Maxwell.*] Mr. Ross contends that he was doing duties as foreman, inasmuch as he had other men under him. That is the case: he had other men under him. But he was not officially recognised at the Head Office as holding the position of foreman, although the evidence which he brings seems to point clearly to the fact that the local officers recognised him as such. Still, the recognition of local officers alone does not seem to suffice, to permit of his receiving compensation for loss of office for the period when he was acting in the manner he has described on the Rimutaka Incline. That, I think, is all I can say about it.

*The Chairman.*] You have heard Mr. Ross's statement as to the services he rendered?—Mr. Ross has always given every satisfaction; but I think he must remember that the District Railway Manager, Mr. Ashcroft, would, if he were here, take to himself the credit for doing all those things which Mr. Ross says he did, and that Mr. Ross, of course, merely had to act under instructions. Then, moreover, when Mr. Ross speaks of working the trains, of course he had to do his work like other persons on the section under instructions from superior officers. I must say that he always did his work to the best of his ability and satisfactorily. But he must not leave the Committee under the impression that he was responsible for the whole of the traffic, and everything else over the incline. Mr. Ashcroft had also another officer under him, an Inspector of Permanent Way, whose duty it was to attend to the road. Now Mr. Ross has told us, for the first time to my knowledge, that he was in charge of the repairs to the road when accidents happened. I do not wish to doubt Mr. Ross's word; I only wish to add that there was an officer under the Manager whose duty it was to attend to the road, although I have no doubt that Mr. Ross rendered material assistance when the road needed extra attention paid to it. I do not wish to disparage Mr. Ross as a foreman.