

He always did very well; but he must bear in mind that there were other officers on the section instructing him. You heard Mr. Ross say that he never heard of the term "leading driver," and also the reference he made to the Register. I am surprised that he never heard it. Sometimes the local officers use the titles very loosely; he referred to Mr. Ashcroft as Railway Manager. That was not his title, and never was so. He was District Manager. I dare say Mr. Ross never heard the title "leading driver," although it has been known on the railways for many years.

37. Do you understand that Mr. Ashcroft, in sending the returns in, designated Mr. Ross as leading driver?—To verify that would be rather difficult, but I will ascertain. That was understood to be Mr. Ross's position at the Head Office. Still, I have not the slightest doubt that he was treated as a foreman by Mr. Ashcroft, judging by Mr. Ashcroft's letter. [I find Mr. Ross's name entered on the pay-sheets as a foreman, but he received extra pay for any overtime worked.—J.P.M., 29/9/92.]

38. Could you, from your own knowledge, say how long Mr. Ross performed duties which might be considered the duties of a foreman?—Yes; from the very first, I think, Mr. Ross had men under him.

39. You think he did the duties of a foreman from the very first?—Yes; they would be foreman's duties. It would be difficult now to precisely define what were regarded as foreman's duties.

40. *Mr. Meredith.*] Do you dispute Mr. Ross's statement that when he took charge of the Rimutaka Incline three of the Fell engines were absolutely worthless?—I think it would be a great exaggeration if Mr. Ross contends that. That was not the case. I did not go into that statement, because it did not affect the question before the Committee. He was a good officer, and I did not want to discuss the position fourteen or fifteen years ago on an exaggerated statement of that kind.

41. You have also heard the statement of Mr. Ross that, in his opinion, the line was about to be closed?—That is absolutely incorrect. Nothing of the kind has ever been heard of before. I did not think it worth while to remark on these points. They do not affect the question at issue at all.

42. *Mr. Taylor.*] Do I understand from you, Mr. Maxwell, that if Mr. Ross was officially recognised as foreman he would be entitled to a greater amount of compensation than that given to him?—I think, if there had been a proper appointment as foreman to a permanent office, that under the Civil Service Act as an officer he would be entitled to greater compensation.

43. *Mr. Joyce.*] How were appointments made some fourteen or fifteen years ago—that is, as foreman and leading driver?—I cannot tell you. I was not in charge then, and do not know how they were made. In 1880 all appointments were sent in to the Head Office as proposals, and if they were approved the appointments were recorded. In 1879 there was a great deal of laxity, and in a large number of cases there was no record as to how the appointments were made.

44. You know that Mr. Ross was appointed by Mr. Ashcroft in 1879?—So Mr. Ross has informed me.

45. And if a record had not been forwarded by Mr. Ashcroft of his appointment as foreman, that would be the fault of Mr. Ashcroft?—I presume so. I cannot say. I cannot speak with absolute certainty as to what occurred in 1879.

46. Have you that register-book referred to?—I have not. I know that at the end of 1880, when I took charge of the railways, I made every effort to find out everything that had been going on; but the books were not always forthcoming. I could make further inquiries, of course.

47. If you are satisfied from the inquiry that Mr. Ross has been foreman, as mentioned by him, you see no objection to giving him the compensation?—The only difficulty I see is this: Mr. Ross has been paid a daily wage, and had extra paid to him for overtime work. That is the bar, as a rule, as regards compensation if there is any doubt. A permanent officer under no circumstances has received extra pay for working overtime. That makes a sort of dividing-line between permanent and temporary officers.

48. I understood Mr. Ross to state yesterday that he worked on Sundays and did not get any overtime, and had not been paid. That was, when he was on the daily-wage pay rate?—On that Mr. Ross could speak with more certainty. I could not speak without searching Treasury vouchers and turning up the pay-sheets. According to rule he ought to have received pay if he worked on a Sunday. That is to say, he would be entitled to pay for seven days instead of six.

*The Chairman:* Have you any questions to ask, Mr. Ross?

*Mr. Ross:* I have no questions to ask, but I wish to place myself right in the eyes of the Committee and Mr. Maxwell. I regret that my evidence has been understood wrongly. I did not say that I had charge of the permanent-way. I simply say that an excellent officer, Mr. Brooks, was in charge of the permanent-way. But the line being smashed in several places, he could not be everywhere. We understood one another; and if I could assist him in the temporary repairs to enable him to get the traffic along, I had his full permission to do so and that of the Manager. I also wish to correct the impression that I was managing everything on the other side of the hill. I was not. I had simply control of the traffic to work it along to its destination as seemed best to me, by night or day. Regarding the condition of the engines when I went there, I wish to correct the impression there. I did not say they were valueless. I simply said that only one engine out of the four was able to bring trains up the hill. The others were simply disabled. There is a wide difference. Next, as to the section as it stood in public opinion: I wish to correct that also. In 1879 Mr. William Stone, who was District Manager before Mr. Ashcroft, wrote to consignees asking them not to forward goods to Featherston at that time, as he could not forward them over the hill. If that is so it is a good indication that the incline was not a brilliant success two months after it was opened. Having corrected the wrong impressions I had created on Mr. Maxwell's mind, I have nothing more to do. The evidence would have read badly if I had not done so. I