

26. With regard to staffing, have you any difficulties in the way of obtaining staff, or the method of obtaining staff?—The present arrangement is undoubtedly too cumbersome. From the time you ask for the staff to the getting of the men at work sometimes months elapse. If you wish it I could give particulars of the system. The position is this: If I require any additional staff—that is, new hands—I correspond direct with the Chief Mechanical Engineer, and I presume, if he is satisfied that those extra men are necessary, he forwards his recommendation to the General Manager.

27. *The Chairman.*] Do you ask for additional staff on your own initiative, or does it come through the foremen?—I get reports from the Workshops Manager that he thinks extra staff is necessary, and then I take the matter in hand for the first time.

28. *Mr. Beattie.*] And what happens after you get the request?—I apply to the Chief Mechanical Engineer, and after that I have my instructions from the General Manager's office direct. They probably write down and tell me that this extra staff is approved or not approved, and at the same time they send me a list of fitters, turners, blacksmiths, labourers, giving me the names and addresses, and I have to communicate with these persons in the order in which they are named on the list. It may happen that the first on the list is dead—I have known such a circumstance—the second on the list may be out of the country, and the third may be in a regular job and does not want the work, and so the operation goes on until I find some one who is willing to start work. This man is then given a start, and after he has been at work for three weeks he is reported on, and if his work and conduct up to that time is not satisfactory he goes. Then the same operation has to be gone through again, starting with the next man on the list. You can therefore see that it frequently takes a very long time before we get the staff that we actually require, and in the meantime the work is not going on as it should do. Then, with regard to filling vacancies, I deal direct with the staff office. When a man is retired on superannuation or dismissed, and I want a man to take his place, I write to the General Manager's office, and I am frequently told that it is not intended to replace this man; and if I think he is absolutely required I have to return to the charge from time to time, and sometimes have to write to Mr. Beattie to assist me to get this vacancy filled. Of course, the General Manager cannot be expected to see to these continual applications for labourers and so on, and the matter must necessarily be left to somebody in the staffing office, and this is the person I have usually to correspond with as regards staff. Occasionally, when we get a new machine and I want a man to work it, I am told to take a man off another machine. I protest, and say it is no use getting a valuable new machine and having no one to work it. A new machine is put in to enable us to turn out more work, and therefore requires additional staff to work the machine. There is one other matter I might mention. Of course, the Classification and Superannuation Acts have to be considered in connection with this matter of appointments. If there is a vacancy, say, for a holder-up or a striker, we have to try the most suitable labourer, and occasionally we have to try a good many before we get the vacancy filled. In fact, there are cases where it has taken months to fill a vacancy of that sort. Some men will not accept the higher position, and others are tried who are found to be quite unsuitable. Altogether in that direction the staffing arrangements are too cumbersome.

29. If you had the authority to engage casual labour as required within certain limitations as regards expenditure, and authority to pay off casual labour when not required, would that facilitate your work?—It would undoubtedly, but I consider that authority should be given to the Workshops Manager. I am often away for a fortnight, and frequently a fortnight's delay is serious. Considering the way we are pressed to push on with the new locomotives a fortnight means a good deal.

30. If you had local authority in connection with casual labour it would facilitate the work?—Undoubtedly. There is one other point I might mention, and that is in connection with getting rid of the staff. That also is rather a cumbersome method in my opinion. I consider that if we find it is necessary to shorten staff we should be able to do so immediately. But at present we have to correspond with the Head Office, and sometimes delays occur. Also, there are certain limitations in paying off men. Single men have to go first, and married men have then to be considered. It frequently happens that amongst the single men are some very excellent hands which we are unable to retain.

31. There was a statement made yesterday by Mr. Jerkinson that an additional leading hand was essential in the boiler-shop?—My opinion is that such is not required. We have a foreman boiler-maker and a leading hand. There are two classes of work that have to be undertaken—one is new work; the other is repairs. My own opinion is that two men are quite able to look after this work.

32. There was some question as to Mr. Henderson's time being too much occupied with clerical work?—I know from my own knowledge that he cannot have much clerical work to do, and if he wants any assistance he can always get it. Mr. Henderson has never complained, as far as I am aware, about having too much clerical work to do, and I do not think he has too much to do. I may say that from time to time additional leading hands are appointed, and the appointment of others is now under consideration. As the work increases, the number of leading hands is increased.

33. Coming to the relative cost of building locomotives at Addington or in a private foundry, and assuming that the private foundry devotes itself nearly exclusively to the building of locomotives, would you consider the private foundry had an advantage in being able to turn out the work?—In my opinion, where you do new and repair work in the same shop, there is bound to come a time when one or other must suffer, and any officer who has any respect for his reputation will see that repair-work is kept up, because if the rolling-stock is allowed to get into bad order, and the general public is affected, there is trouble immediately. As a matter of fact, for years past the Hurunui-Bluff Section has been so short of rolling-stock that before an important holiday, such as Carnival Week, Christmas, or Grand National Week, it has been necessary to turn out every engine from the shops. That means that for three or four weeks before all the big holidays we have to concentrate our energies on repair-work, and very often the new locomotive work has to suffer, and sometimes seriously.