

11. But in the event of that power being given to the local officer?—All the man would be entitled to would be the moneys he had contributed to the fund; that is all he would draw.

12. Take a supposititious case. Say a man has been employed as a casual for five years, and local officers have the power to dispense with this man. That man, through, say, a hasty action of the local officer, is dismissed, but he afterwards shows that he was wrongfully dismissed, and is re-engaged—the whole of his previous time will be lost to him?—Not if he is reinstated by the Appeal Board, and the Appeal Board's finding has the Minister's approval.

13. As a casual he would have no right to appeal?—You are speaking of a casual appointed a permanent.

14. No; before he is appointed a permanent?—He would not be a contributor to the fund before he was appointed a permanent. He would not be a member of the service.

15. In the event of that man getting back to the Railway service?—Oh! you are referring to the break in casual service.

16. Yes: would that previous time count?—Yes, if he was reinstated. He would be paid for the time during which he was suspended.

17. He would not be suspended. As a casual hand he would be straight-out dismissed?—Oh! of course, he has not got that power at the present time. But in the event of straight-out dismissal, if the Appeal Board said that the dismissal was a wrong one, he would be reinstated and would not lose by it.

18. He would have to use other ways of establishing his innocence than through the Appeal Board, for as a casual he has no right of appeal?—As a casual, that is so.

19. Regarding these men who have brought about improvements from time to time, you said that they have applied to you for recognition: how long do you think it would take for a man to get a reply to such an application?—It all depends. The receipt of the letter should be acknowledged in the ordinary course—that is, formal acknowledgment—and it should take some time to investigate the merits of the invention. It might take months. But he would get there ultimately if the appliance was proved satisfactory.

20. Supposing you were told that one man at Addington applied for recognition and got no formal acknowledgment for nine months?—It may be possible, but I cannot answer for what the local officers do. I have no doubt, in a case of that kind, that the foreman would advise the workman verbally that he had forwarded on the letter. He might not have it in black and white, but he would be cognisant of the fact that the device had been forwarded.

21. Do you consider it possible that a man might have made application fourteen months ago and not yet got a definite reply?—I am not aware of any such case.

22. Do you think it possible?—All things are possible; but it is very improbable.

A. L. BEATTIE, Chief Mechanical Engineer, examined. (No. 28.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Have you had any comparisons made of the cost of similar work executed at Petone, Addington, and Hillside?—Yes, comparisons are regularly made when comparisons are practicable. I may state, for the information of the Board, that it is not always practicable to make comparisons as between Workshops, because they may be on different work; but when they are on the same work comparisons are regularly made month by month and on the completion of special orders. By way of illustration I will put in certain recent comparisons which I have made myself. [Return put in.]

2. What do you find is the result of the comparisons on a general average?—The results, as a rule, run fairly closely. Sometimes one Workshop is a little ahead of another, but that is very often accounted for by local circumstances. In one case it was with regard to the cost of local materials. I have dealt with that rather more fully in my address which I propose to put before you. For instance, for local contracts in particular centres, the rates for the supplies of iron and steel, and so on, vary as between Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin. So that we will suppose Newmarket obtained material from an Auckland contractor at a somewhat higher rate per ton than, say, Addington from a Christchurch contractor, that would naturally influence the total cost of the job, and where you notice from that return I have put in slight variations, in most cases those are due to local variations in the cost of material. But such comparisons are regularly made and regularly recorded. I may say that any considerable diversity which is not accounted for by variation in cost of material is investigated very closely, with a view to ascertaining the reason, and with a view to putting the thing on a better footing.

3. The Board would like to know what contracts for points and crossings have been carried out by the Dispatch Foundry, Greymouth?—I have already put in all the information I have available with regard to points-and-crossings orders, and those go back to July, 1906. I have not anything antecedent to that. In that particular 1906 contract—which, I may say, was for points and crossings for the Public Works Department—the various tender prices are summarised in the return, and the Dispatch Foundry was a tenderer for supplies but was not successful. Prior to that date I have no information on the subject. I may say that the Dispatch Foundry has not made any points and crossings for the Railway Department for a great many years. I think I am right in saying that they did not make any for the Railway Department. I may also put in, in connection with the cost of Railway stock, a return which might be of interest to the Commissioners, showing the relative cost of importing certain *La* wagons, having similar wagons built under contract in New Zealand by two different firms, and similar wagons built in our own workshops.

4. You have a system of accounting and cost-keeping with regard to work done in the shops. Do you find it satisfactory?—So far as I am aware it is generally satisfactory. To anybody not acquainted