

that the Railway fines start at 2s. 6d. and work up to £5. To give you an instance, if a man in the Telegraph Department makes a faulty connection—that is, if he is testing a wire and makes a faulty connection—he is fined 1s., whereas if a man working a tablet machine at a station makes the least mistake whereby it can be proved that he is responsible for that mistake he is fined not 1s. or 5s., but £1. I say that if our duties are so responsible that if we make a mistake we must be fined to the extent of £1 or 2s. 6d., that if those lists are placed side by side and the responsibilities are to be judged from those lists, then there is no reason why the Railway man should not be paid for his responsibilities. In quoting the Postal Department as compared with the Railway service we do not for one moment say that the Postal officer is overpaid, but we say that we are underpaid. The majority of the Railway Stationmasters in New Zealand are capable of taking charge of any post-office outside the chief post-office. In addition to being able to carry out the postal business they must be competent operators, they must pass an examination in operating and connections, they must have a fair knowledge of railway accountancy, and also a practical knowledge of the various systems of signalling in use in our Department. For instance, they must understand the tablet system, the lock-and-block system, staff-and-ticket system, line-clear working, and also be capable of working trains on lines which are not protected by safety appliances, which means that on them rests the responsibility of taking telegrams from the District Officer, and the slightest error might lead to a collision. They have also to direct all operations under their charge, to see that the duties are allocated and signalling-work performed and premises kept in good order. Moreover, it must be remembered that a Stationmaster's hours are longer, more irregular, and frequently they extend from early morning till late at night. There is no such thing in our Department as a Stationmaster being off duty for any length of time even when you are not required. If you want to go away from the station you must get the authority of the Manager to leave that station for a night, and you are liable to be called out at any moment during the night or day. In the case of the Postal officer in a country town, his hours, generally speaking, average about seven per day. He shuts his office, and the public cannot get him unless in cases of extreme urgency, where they have to pay extra, and he is also paid overtime in the majority of cases. Now, the most serious mistakes a Postal officer can be guilty of are errors in telegraphic work, loss of money or registered letters, and delaying correspondence. If he loses a registered letter containing money he has to pay the amount. If a Railway officer is in charge of a combined station and he loses a registered letter containing money he has to make it good the same as the Postal officer. Therefore we are equal in that respect, but in all other instances their punishments or fines are ever so much lighter than ours. That is another argument to show that the greater the responsibility a man carries the greater the salary he should receive. Combined Railway and Post officers have to work up, and the Railway officer has to carry out those duties efficiently under the supervision of the Chief Postmaster for the district, and if the Committee obtain the gazetted salaries of the Post officers at combined stations where they have been separated within the last ten years from the railway you will find in nearly all cases the salary is equal to, if not more than, that paid to the Railway officer for doing the combined duties. For instance, I will quote the case of Wyndham, in the Southland Section. When Wyndham was separated—that is, when the Post Office sent their own officers to take charge—they only had to take over one-half of the duties. I will give first the salaries of the men under the Railway Stationmaster. The Stationmaster received £170, cadet £100, letter-carrier £80, Telegraphic Post Office messenger £26, and one labourer employed at 8s. per day—a total of £516. Now, in regard to the Post Office salaries, which figures can be verified by turning up the Post Office classification, the Postmaster received £245 when he took over the office, against the Stationmaster's £170. The postal cadet who was put there received £95, against the Railway Cadet's £100; the Postal officer took over the same other two officers as the Railway man had under him at the same salaries. The amount paid after they were separated was £840 16s. for the running of the Postal Department, while under the combined system they received only £500 odd. Therefore it costs the Government, who is the employer of those two staffs of men, £340 more; and we say we are justified in asking for larger salaries, and also in asking that our services should be equally remunerated with the Post and Telegraph, seeing that we do a lot of their duties. There are other stations, such as Rakaia, Takapau, Winton, Otautau, and Waikouaiti, where the duties of both Departments was controlled by Railway officers receiving salaries of from £200 to £255, while the Postmasters for performing the Post and Telegraph duties alone are now receiving from £20 to £60 more per annum than the Stationmaster was in receipt of for performing both duties. It has been stated that the Post and Telegraph officer had certain examinations to pass before he could get to £260. The Hon. Mr. Millar made the statement when cross-examining Mr. Dennehy in regard to the examinations. I will quote the examinations: A boy entering the Post and Telegraph Department must enter as a telegraph messenger, unless he has passed the Junior Civil Service, when he is then eligible for appointment as a cadet. The qualification to overcome £200 per annum and increase to £220 is an oral examination set by the officer in charge in regard to the rules and regulations and duties carried out at the time. Then, to overcome £220 to £260 in the various branches dependent on which the member is in at the time—i.e., Telegraph Department, Postal Department, Electrical Department, and Engineers Department—the papers for the examination are set by the Department. To get an increase from £260 they have to pass the Senior Civil Service Examination. This examination was brought into force on the 13th September, 1890, and therefore I take it that the officers joining the service before that would not come under that regulation. Mr. Dennehy, in his evidence, said that the Railway officers now at the top of the lowest grade at a salary of £200, having nineteen years' service to their credit, therefore the position is that a son of any of those officers could join the service to-morrow and reach a salary of £200 in twelve years, and, according to the way that promotion has increased from one grade to another and the proportion of increases made, he would get there before his father got beyond £220. Now, gentlemen, I put it, is that a fair position so far as these officers