

FRIDAY, 22ND SEPTEMBER, 1911.

ALEXANDER THOMAS ENNIS examined. (No. 9.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—Traffic Inspector at Invercargill.

2. You wish to make a statement before the Committee?—Yes. I am called to give evidence as regards the duties of Traffic Managers, Traffic Clerks, and Traffic Inspectors. Before doing so I should like to read a statement made in the House by the Right Hon. Sir Joseph Ward in connection with the Railway Classification Bill, 1907 (*Hansard*, No. 40, session 1907, p. 641). The statement is as follows: "I want to place on record, because it is not fair, when we go into an important matter such as this is, in dealing with a great public service, that any one should select a particular officer in some part of the country and make a comparison between that officer's salary and that of another officer in another branch of the public service and send it throughout the country as a fair comparison between the manner in which the respective Departments were paid. For instance, to give a typical case of what I mean—and I do not think any one in the service, and certainly no one in the country who looks at it impartially, will say that it is a fair thing to do—take centres of the colony where there is a Railway Traffic Manager or a Traffic Superintendent, and where in the same town there is a Chief Postmaster: what has been the comparison urged with the view of showing that the Railway service is underpaid compared with the Post and Telegraph Department? You have heard the statement made that the Postmaster in one of the cities gets more than the Stationmaster in the same place. What is the relative position between the Postmaster and the officer who holds a similar position in the Railways? It is not the Stationmaster: it is the Traffic Manager. The Chief Postmaster is the one who takes the relative position to the Traffic Manager of Railways in that centre. He is the man in charge of that district. He is the officer with whom the Head Office from time to time communicates, and who is responsible for the local supervision and the local administration of the whole district. In the Railway Department the position correlative to that is that of the Traffic Manager. And I say that when an attempt is made to create an impression that the Postmaster and the Stationmaster are receiving different salaries it is unfair, because it is creating an impression that the comparison is against the Railway service, whilst the proper comparison has not been made. I allude to that for the purpose of showing that we should be right and fair in making comparisons of the kind. I cannot go into the question of a former Bill, but I have already pointed out that two grades of Postmasters are provided for in the Bill which has just been passed; they occupy the position I have stated, and, being in control of the whole of the Postal service in those districts, they are the men who are responsible for the proper conduct of the business, and they are paid accordingly and in proportion to the Traffic Managers of Railways. Some of the Chief Postmasters, however, do not receive equal pay to that of the Traffic Managers in the Railway service. These are preliminary remarks in connection with this Bill, because I want to try—and I am sure the House also does—to do what is right and fair to the Railway service of the country." I think that shows we are justified in comparing the position of Traffic Managers with that of Chief Postmasters. The Traffic Managers are in charge of the Traffic Branch in various districts in the colony, and the mileage of those districts run from thirty to over five hundred miles. The average staff under a Traffic Manager is something like 457 men. We were unable to get from the Postal statements a similar average, but if the whole of the Postal service of 6,593 members is taken that gives an average of 388 members to the seventeen Chief Postmasters of the Dominion. That is not nearly so high an average as the staff under a Traffic Manager; but then, this has to be considered in addition: that among the Postal staff there are 2,157 country Postmasters and postmistresses carrying on work in connection with the Postal service who are not permanent employees but who are indirectly connected with it. They cannot claim to be in the same position as Railway employees. The difference in favour of the Railway Traffic Manager would be much greater, and I think nothing shows better so far as the difference between the two services is concerned than the case of those country Postmasters that I have mentioned. With a few days' tuition any one of ordinary intelligence could carry on the work of a country post-office, and telephone also, whereas it takes years of training for any young man before he is considered to be competent to be put in charge of the smallest country railway-station. The Traffic Manager has to see to the organization of the staff under his control; he is responsible for seeing that the men are used to the best advantage of the Railway service, and the business being so varied it requires a large and varied class of employees to carry it on. This naturally requires more care in supervision on the part of the Traffic Manager, because the greater the number and class of employees, and the more exacting the work, the more difficult it is to supervise them. The Traffic Manager also controls the issue of stores and stationery to the Traffic Branch of his district, deals with the claims of the public, settles doubtful questions in connection with the tariff; and if the railway tariff is considered, with its thousands of rates as compared with the tariff of the Postal Department, it is obvious to any one how much more it requires a man to study it. The Traffic Manager is also responsible for the time-table of his district, and I consider this is the most important part of his work. The railways are a factor in developing the country, and unless there is a suitable time-table industries which might extend would be hampered, and, while he has to be careful that trains are not run at a great loss, he must consider whether, by perhaps straining a point now and again, he will enable industries to extend which would develop with a little encouragement. That refers to the ordinary time-table carrying the ordinary traffic of the district. They have also special time-tables for shows, races, and so forth, when abnormal traffic occurs, and those require special thought and consideration, so that they will meet the requirements of the events for which they are run and at the same time not interfere too much with the ordinary traffic. I would point out also that on public holidays, when the railway traffic is heaviest, the postal offices as a rule can close and the officers can go away and enjoy themselves, whereas the Railway Manager has to carry out the work which it has taken probably weeks to pre-