

conversant with all the facts in connection with the question he was asking, and I can see plainly that it would be very much better for those gentlemen if they had not asked the questions at all. Although it may delay the proceedings a little, I think it may be the fairer way to allow each officer who has given evidence, and whose evidence was traversed by Mr. McVilly in reply, to put questions in regard to that portion of the evidence which has been traversed by Mr. McVilly direct by himself to Mr. McVilly instead of through a third party. I presume neither the General Manager nor the Minister nor Mr. McVilly would object to that.

*Mr. Ronayne:* The General Manager would object. The method of procedure has been decided.

*Mr. Ross:* We can alter that.

*Mr. Ronayne:* The method of procedure has been decided, and we have been working four days on that procedure, and I think we should go on. I believe that is the Minister's opinion.

*The Chairman:* Of course, each member can ask questions on a particular clause if he has specialized on any section of the petition. Referring to the procedure, we have already fixed that by resolution of the Committee at the very beginning, and we have continued along those lines for some time now. Of course, I am in the hands of the Committee, but, still, I do not know that it would be an advantage to either side to alter now.

RICHARD WILLIAM MCVILLY, examination continued. (No. 13.)

1. *Mr. Ramsay:* When we left off yesterday, Mr. McVilly, I was asking you certain questions as to the men transferred from the Postal Department to the Railway Department. You referred in particular to Messrs. Donne, Russell, and Wallnut. Did you not wish the Committee to believe that each of the above persons was appointed directly as Stationmasters?—I may have made such a statement. I said that Messrs. Donne, Russell, and Wallnut were transferred from the Postal Department to the Railway Department, and Mr. Donne's first position in the Railway service was Stationmaster at Waitati. Mr. Russell was, I believe, at Abbotsford. I have not looked up the record of Mr. Wallnut, but I believe he was Stationmaster also.

2. So that they were all transferred direct from the Postal Department to the position of Stationmaster?—I say I believe they were. I will require to look it up, but, speaking from memory, I believe they were transferred from the Postal Department to the Railway Department, and they became most excellent Railway officers from the outset.

3. Is it not a fact that at the time those men were transferred the Railway Department had to take all kinds of men to be trained as Railway men?—No, it is not a fact.

4. Would you take the responsibility of appointing similarly untrained men for the position of Stationmasters at the present time?—If I could get Donnes, Russells, and Wallnuts I would take them every time, and would be quite prepared to take the responsibility of placing similar men in similar positions in the Railway Department to-day.

5. You would not take the others?—You particularly referred me to those three gentlemen. If you want me to deal with generalities you come along and I will deal with them.

6. In regard to rents, you stated that in a large number of cases the amount of rent paid for railway dwellings was from 4s. to 9s. 6d.?—I said there were 215 cases, I think, in which the rents were below 10s., and they ranged from 4s. to 9s. 6d. I will give you the complete answer, which is as follows: 31 pay £25 per year—that is, 10s. a week; 13 pay £24 14s.; 9 pay £23 8s.; 9 pay £22 2s.; 8 pay £20 16s.; 80 pay £20; 13 pay £19 10s.; 21 pay £18 4s.; 8 pay £16 18s.; 6 pay £15 12s.; 8 pay £14 6s.; 1 pays £13; 1 pays £10 8s. There is a range from about 4s. to 9s. 6d. per week.

7. Are all those men Stationmasters?—Those are rents of station houses.

8. Are they occupied by Stationmasters?—I cannot say that—I believe they are. At all events, my list shows the rentals paid by Stationmasters, and if the houses are not occupied by Stationmasters, then the Stationmasters have let them probably without in such cases obtaining the sanction of the management.

9. Those 215 houses are houses which are set apart for Stationmasters only?—I am talking about the rent of houses for Stationmasters.

10. I want to know if those 215 houses are set apart for Stationmasters alone?—They are set apart for Stationmasters.

11. And as far as you know they are all occupied by Stationmasters at the present moment?—Yes, I know the Stationmasters are charged the rent.

12. You have referred to the salaries paid to Foremen in 1897 and 1910?—Yes.

13. Do you know whether the duties have increased during the last thirteen years to your own knowledge?—I do not know of my own knowledge, but I should say that, having regard to the amount of money that the Department has spent in improving the conditions of the line, the duties are, comparatively speaking, easier now—that is, there is not so much anxiety on the men now as there was years ago.

14. You do not know of your own knowledge whether the salaries have increased?—Of my own knowledge I know the salaries have increased.

15. But do Foremen of Works deal with the line?—Foremen of Works deal with bridges and structures.

16. But not the line?—That is part of the line.

17. Well, does he or does he not?—Bridges are part of the line, certainly.

18. But they do not lay the lines?—That is the Inspector of Permanent-way's job.

19. So that they do not deal with the line?—Yes, they deal with their particular portion of the line.

20. Do you know that bridges are constructed largely of steel in place of timber, and that renewals in steel are now the common practice, and that the Foremen of Works now require a more varied knowledge?—It is a matter of opinion whether the Foreman of Works does require a more varied knowledge.