

21. You are not acquainted with it?—I am not an iron and steel expert.

22. Now, Mr. McVilly, coming to this Victorian comparison you have produced, the statement showing the salaries paid to Stationmasters in Victoria as compared with those Stationmasters in New Zealand: We do not admit that the comparisons are relevant to the petition before the Committee. We wish to make a comparison with the next largest democratic institution in the Dominion working under similar conditions in our own Dominion and under our own Government. Do you not consider that is reasonable?—No, I do not.

23. As you insisted on making a comparison with the Victorian railways and quoted the Victorian rates of pay, are you prepared to quote the amount paid as compensation for accidents?—Accidents to whom?

24. Accidents on the railways resulting in loss?—I do not think that has anything at all to do with the staff.

25. So that you are not prepared to quote that?—I am not going to quote accidents.

26. If I state that the compensation in connection with the Richmond and Sunshine catastrophes alone amounted to £250,000 would you deny it?—I should not be prepared to admit it unless I looked up the facts for myself. It may be so. I know a large amount was paid.

27. Do any of the Australian Stationmasters quoted by you perform postal duties besides their railway duties?—That I am not prepared to say, but I believe some do. I cannot say definitely.

28. Is there not a greater disparity between the pay of the managing officers and the rank and file in Australia than obtains in New Zealand?—Yes, there is, but for the purposes of this petition the Railway Department is not disposed to discuss with the institute the question of the pay of the management. That is a question between the managing officers and the Government.

29. Of course, you cannot say whether you are in favour of introducing a similar system in New Zealand or not?—The question as to whether Railway Commissioners are to be introduced into New Zealand or not is a question of Government policy. Yesterday I quoted the total working-expenses from 1882 to 1887 and 1889, and I reminded officers then and we all know what happened in 1887, 1888, and 1889 when the expenses went up, and I have come back now—

30. You read that yesterday?—Pardon me, you raised the question whether I am prepared to discuss the question of Railway Commissioners, and I am just reminding you—

31. I never asked any questions about Railway Commissioners at all?—Pardon me, you did. That is the inference. You asked me if I was prepared to say whether I agreed to the same system being adopted in New Zealand that is adopted in Victoria, and that is the Commissioner system.

32. That is not so: my question was, Is there not a greater disparity between the pay of the managing officers and the rank and file in Australia than obtains in New Zealand?—I answered that question, and you followed it up with the other.

33. Will you deny that the maximum salary in the lowest grade per annum, including house-allowance, for Stationmasters in Victoria now is only £4 10s. less than in New Zealand, and that the highest salary is £52 more; also that the privileges in regard to free passes are very much better than they are in New Zealand?—Where are you getting your £52? I stated yesterday that in any statement of comparisons for the purpose of bringing in house-rent the value of the houses would have to be based on the same principle as in New Zealand for the purposes of comparison.

34. Why is that?—Because you cannot take inflated rents into consideration in one place and the minimum in another. If the Railway Department, instead of charging a paper value, lets a house for £14, then, if you want to make a fair comparison between a Stationmaster here and a Stationmaster elsewhere, you have to take this value for the house.

35. But is not a definite amount allowed for house-accommodation in Victoria?—Not that I am aware of.

36. Would you be surprised to know that there is a definite amount allowed?—I have the book here, but I have not looked it up.

37. Will you look it up?—Yes. It says, "Stationmasters, if in receipt of less than £200 per annum, 17s. 6d. a week."

38. So that a definite amount is allowed?—Yes.

39. So that in regard to your point about similar rent and conditions there is nothing in it?—Yes, there is something in it. That is a paper value, and the comparison is still here. It is a house for a house.

40. Still, the fact remains that if a house is not provided they are allowed, where the Stationmaster receives less than £200 a year, 17s. 6d. a week?—Yes.

41. Will you deny that the maximum salary in the lowest grade, including house-allowance, in Victoria for Stationmasters is only £4 less than in New Zealand?—As from the 1st June, 1911; but you are dealing with 1910. As I explained the other day, what you are dealing with is a comparison in the statement furnished to me by the Railways Secretary in 1910, which I also quoted, and in which the pay of the Stationmaster was £130 per annum and a house.

42. This scale had been in contemplation for some time back?—It is not a question of what has been in contemplation for some time back. When I quoted 1911 the other day you were careful to get it struck out. For the purpose of being open, I read what were the conditions of pay in 1910 compared with our 1910, and then I read out what the conditions were under the new regulations, because I wished to be perfectly open with the Committee. I am quoting now the comparison to be made with those Stationmasters which I read out yesterday and advised the Committee—

43. But before you go on I want my question answered. Will you deny that the maximum salary in the lowest grade, including house-allowance, in Victoria for Stationmasters is only £4 less than in New Zealand?—I said as from June, 1911.

44. And that the highest salary is £52 more than in Victoria than in New Zealand, including house-allowance?—It may not be.