

Single-handed Stations.

	Hours open.	Hands employed.		Hours open.	Hands employed.
Shortland	10	1	Selwyn	9	1
Taringamutu	11½	1	Mount Somers	12	1
Tariki	13	1	Winston	12½	1
Te Aute	12½	1	Winchester	10½	1
Opawa	11	1	Washdyke	13	1
Styx	11½	1	Makikihi	12	1
Cust	9½	1	Dunback	9	1
Oxford East	14½	1	Port Chalmers, Upper	13	1
Sefton	12½	1	Oturehua (Postal; busy)	9½	1
Prebbleton	10	1	Tapanui	10	1
Springston	9½	1	Fairfax	9	1
Ellesmere	10	1	Ahaura	13	1
Dayleston	11	1	Richmond	9½	1
Burnham	10	1			

The information contained in the foregoing statement is supplied by the officers themselves. In the case of Washdyke Station, there are more hours worked at this station on account of special trains run after ordinary hours of duty. This case was, I think, represented to the Department in June last as requiring some special relief, but up to the present time no relief has been granted to this officer. He has corresponded with the Department and laid his case before the institute. We have also laid the case before the General Manager, and, as illustrating that the hours worked are not singular, I will read a letter that this officer received from his District Manager. He wrote calling attention to the long hours, and the answer was as follows: "I regret I cannot arrange for relief of this kind. Ordinarily you are only on from 7 a.m. to 7.30 p.m., and there are other stations having as long or longer hours of regular duty, with attendance on specials when necessary. Specials will soon cease for some months, except unusual trips." Now, gentlemen, that is the opinion of the officer in charge of that section. I only mention that by the way of showing that it is the opinion even of District Officers that long hours are worked and are expected to be worked. Now, gentlemen, the hours worked in other Government Departments are fixed on a seven-hours-a-day or thirty-nine-hours-a-week basis—that is, 9 to 5 daily, with a half-holiday on Saturday. In the case of the Post and Telegraph Department, overtime is paid (or time off given) for all time worked in excess of 48 hours per week, and in other Government Departments they receive certain allowances if called upon to work after 5 p.m. As an example I might just instance Postal officers, a number of whom are at present called upon to work overtime in connection with electoral business. These officers are receiving payment for overtime at the scale shown in Schedule F. Now, sir, note the difference. In the Railway Department the officer must work any hours the exigencies of the service demands, and payment for overtime is not allowed under any circumstances. Many Railway officers are on duty from ten to twelve hours daily, and a large number, such as those quoted by me, work all through the year at not less than nine hours daily. The Department, I have no doubt, will advance the argument that at many of these places the work is intermittent, but it is certainly no more intermittent than that of the Postmaster in the same town, whose hours are fixed at 9 to 5, whereas the Railway officers' hours may be anything from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. To give some idea of the cost to the Department if the daily duty were reduced to eight hours, I will take the case of an officer in receipt of a salary of less than £200 per annum working nine hours per day: if he were paid overtime at the Postal scale he would receive £23 odd in the course of the year; if he worked nine and a half hours he would receive £35 odd, and if he worked ten hours a day, £46 per year. Yet the Department maintains that the free passes, which are not worth anything like this amount, are given as a consideration not only for overtime but to compensate officers for the difference in the salaries paid in the Post and Telegraph Department and the Railways, and also the difference in the annual leave in these two Departments. Another point that should not be lost sight of is the fact that the Railway Department indirectly benefits from the free passes which are granted to its officers, as these passes enable officers to travel about and meet other officers and discuss with them the methods obtaining in different centres, to observe the manner in which the work is carried out in these places, and so improve their knowledge of railway matters generally. We have recognized all along the difficulties with which the Department has to contend in regard to arranging the hours of duty to avoid overtime, and if you will refer to paragraph D of the prayer of the petition you will see we are quite prepared to forego any claim to overtime provided the Department allows its officers the same annual leave as is granted to officers in the Post and Telegraph Department, and does not deduct sick-leave from annual leave. If, therefore, the Department is agreeable to sick-leave up to twenty-eight days not being deducted from annual leave, then the officers will not press for payment of overtime; but we certainly think that in those stations where officers work in excess of nine hours and a half daily some system should be devised whereby such officers should receive time off. Clause D of the prayer of the petition says, "That railway officers shall receive the same annual leave as officers in the Post and Telegraph Department, and that sick-leave shall not be deducted from annual leave, or, in the alternative, that Railway officers shall receive the same annual leave, the same sick-leave, and the same payment for overtime as officers in the Post and Telegraph Department." Now, gentlemen, I have very little more to add to what I have already pointed out. It will be obvious to any reasonable business man that we are not asking for anything outrageous. We are simply adhering to our petition by making a comparison with the only classified Department that we have available. These comparisons in the classification of the Department have been going on for years, and does not that of itself show that the classification has always been admitted as a comparison?—The Department has used it against us as well as for us. Now that the Post and Telegraph Department has reached a height to which we are not allowed to get, we submit that we have a perfect right to try and endeavour to get up to that height. That is all I have to say on that subject.