

3. *Mr. McVilly.*] Mr. Graham, will you tell the Committee exactly what the institute wants in the matter of hours—what is to be the length of your day?—We base the petition on the conditions in the Post and Telegraph Department.

4. You have made certain statements in regard to officers working nine, nine and a half, ten, eleven, and twelve hours, and then you spoke in a general way about the length of the day. Now, I want to know, on behalf of the Department, from the institute exactly what length of day you are contending for?—We are not contending for any special length of day. We contend that the Department should endeavour to meet us and fix a day, and then when they have fixed it we are prepared to say whether those hours are suitable or otherwise.

5. But you have based all your argument on the Postal hours of 9 to 5?—Yes, the comparison.

6. Well, is that what you want?—If we could get it we should be only too pleased to have it.

7. We will come down to the 9-to-5 basis: have you ever taken into consideration what the cost of this alteration would be that you are asking for?—No, sir, and I simply say that the Post and Telegraph Department has not evidently been a bugbear to Parliament, and I think we may safely leave the question of cost in the hands of the House.

8. Well, that is all right, but there must be some relation between the cost of working the Department and the revenue of the Department, must there not?—No, sir, I do not think it always follows—not in the Railway Department.

9. Then is your contention this: that the whole of the receipts of the Department should be eaten up in working-expenses?—I have never contended that at all, sir.

10. Then, if you are going to consider a question of this kind irrespective of the cost, on what basis are you going to consider it?—I have already said that we leave that in the hands of the Department to consider, and then they will advise us later what they consider should be the proper hours and the cost.

11. Well, is it not within your knowledge that the working-cost of the Department has been extremely heavy for many years—practically the maximum?—I am not prepared to go into the question about the cost, because I have not got statistics or anything else to show me that the cost has been heavy. You might as well ask me, is it not a fact that the Railway Department had to supply immense quantities of coal in the Dominion at an abnormal expenditure, and also to import an extraordinary large quantity of plant. Those are questions that our institute has nothing to do with, and which I think are rather policy matters.

12. I am not talking about that, but the cost of working the Department. You say you have no information. Is it not a fact that for many years past every Stationmaster has been regularly furnished with a copy of the Railway Statement?—I believe that is correct.

13. Then, the percentage of cost is shown there from 1883, I think, up to date?—Yes.

14. If you have read that Statement, are you not aware that the Statement shows that the ratio of expenses to earnings has been an ever-increasing one?—Well, I think we cannot show a comparison with the whole of the costs of the Railway Department as against our contention on this head.

15. But the Railway Statement shows what the costs are of the Traffic Department, for instance?—Not the officers alone.

16. The cost of working the Traffic Department?—Yes, but you are including the outdoor division as well.

17. I am asking you, are you not aware that the ratio of cost has gone up considerably?—I am not prepared to give reasons for that. Possibly it is known to the Department.

18. Well, what is going to be the effect of giving compliance to your request—what increase of staff do you consider the Department would require to employ?—Well, having no statistics at my finger-ends I am not in a position to say what increased staff would be required.

19. Well, it comes down to this: that you have put forward this proposition without considering at all the financial effect?—No, sir, I do not think it is the duty of the Railway Officers' Institute to consider the financial effect. That is for our betters to do.

20. You do not think that is part of your duty?—No.

21. Then the duty of the Officers' Institute begins and ends with making requests that are going to involve the country in the expenditure of a large amount of money without consideration of the effect of the request?—We are not making a request in the true sense of the word—we are making a comparison.

22. But you are asking for something—you are making a demand?—We are asking as an alternative. We wish to make our position as plain as we can that we are working under certain disabilities, and we want, if possible, those disabilities removed, and we are making a comparison with the Post and Telegraph scales. We are not demanding anything like that at all; we are leaving it to Parliament and the Department to fix any scales of that sort themselves.

23. Well, then, do you wish the Department to understand that all you have got in view in putting this request forward is for the Department to take the matter into consideration and see what can be done towards meeting the request, and that you are going to be satisfied?—Well, after we understand to what extent the Department is prepared to go in meeting our request I should be better able to answer you, but at the present time I do not know what the Department contemplate doing, nor what they may do.

24. You made a statement just now that you were putting the request forward, and the institute would be content to leave the matter to the Department: well, I want to know—?—Not the Department. I said we would be content to leave our case in the hands of Parliament and the Department.

25. Not the Department?—No. We have approached the Department previously, Mr. McVilly, and got no satisfaction, and we have now got to appeal to Parliament, hence the petition. Our present appeal is to Parliament.