

117. *Mr. Witty.*] Mr. Graham, you read out a list of officers who were working excessive hours. Could that not be altered? Are there not some stations that are really overmanned, and by adjustment they could be equalized?—No, sir, I would not admit that. I do not know of any station in the New Zealand Railways that is overmanned; but it is possible, by taking an officer, we will say, from one station for half a day and sending him along to another station, to give what you call "compensation leave." It is possible to do that in a number of cases. There may be a station alongside with a staff of seven or eight, and instances have come under my notice where the Department has relieved on this system by asking the Stationmaster at one station to send one of his clerks along for half a day to relieve So-and-so.

118. You do not know of new stations in new districts where they have taken the work from both sides, and the work at the centre or new station is three times as much as the others, and still the staff at the old stations is kept up?—It may be possible, but I have no knowledge of any such case. It comes down to the same thing that I pointed out: that if the men on either side have larger staffs it is quite possible they could sneak a man off one staff for half a day to enable them to have equality of hours.

RICHARD WILLIAM MCVILLY further examined. (No. 26.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Do you wish to reply on behalf of the Department to clause 15?—Yes. This clause, sir, like most other clauses in the petition, is a plea from the Officers' Institute in the direction of increasing the operating expenses for the Working Railways Department quite irrespective of what the financial results are going to be. I have already pointed out to the Committee that the concessions given to Railway officers, and which it has been admitted by Mr. Graham on behalf of the institute it is fair to take into consideration in dealing with any extra services that any of the officers may perform, amount to a very considerable sum—viz., £129,000 per annum. While it may be perfectly true that officers of the Postal Department receive a certain amount of pay for overtime worked on Sundays and statutory holidays, it has also to be borne in mind that where this overtime is paid the officers do not get the seven days' leave shown in the schedules, and which has been so much talked about by the institute; they simply get pay, or in lieu thereof time off at the convenience of the Department, and that it is admitted in the petition. Well, sir, so far as the operating expenses of the Railway Department are concerned, this is one of the items that have to be taken into consideration. It is a question of the aggregation of small things which amount to a very large sum. The institute cannot dispute the fact that, where Railway officers are asked to perform necessary Sunday duty in the ordinary sense, where they are brought out specially for train services on port lines or for the purpose of carrying out in the large offices work that it is necessary to perform on Sunday, they get payment of one day's full pay. I stated yesterday what the position was in regard to one or two cases, and I wish now to show that the Department has not exaggerated the position in any way nor alluded to the difficulties of dealing with this overtime question without having good grounds for the attitude taken up. Now, here is one case which I had in my mind when I was being examined by Mr. Graham just now: "24th February, 1911.—General Manager, Wellington.—Payment of Sunday duty: Since the present Saturday late train service has been running between Christchurch and Rangiora application has been made by the First Division staff at Rangiora for Sunday pay. The passenger-train leaves Christchurch at 10.45 p.m. and arrives Rangiora at 11.50 p.m. The return empty train leaves Rangiora at 12.5 a.m. (Sunday) and arrives Christchurch 1.5 a.m. The return train is no doubt a Sunday one, still the duty so far as the staff is concerned must be continuous from the Saturday night, and it is not a case where they are called out to work a train on Sundays. Either the Stationmaster or clerk is on duty for the trains. Please advise if Sunday pay is to be allowed in this case." There is a beautiful position—a man works five minutes past midnight on Saturday finishing his shift, and he wants to be paid a full day's pay for that five minutes. Now, he not only wanted to be paid, but actually entered himself on the pay-sheet. "9th February, 1911.—On our pay-sheet for P.E. February 4th, 1911, I entered Clerk —, two days for Sunday duty worked in connection with Sunday morning trains on 15th to 29th January. I find these have been struck out. Will you kindly say why? We have always previously been paid Sunday duty for this work in accordance with circular 08/108." If, as it appears, entries of that kind were passed through on the pay-sheets it reflects on the officer who checked them in the Christchurch office, because the Department never contemplated making payments of that nature and would not countenance anything of that kind.

2. *Mr. Ross.*] This petition is not asking for that?—I am dealing with the clause in regard to Sunday pay. I am indicating the sort of thing the Department has to contend against, and using it as an argument to show the position we are frequently placed in not only in regard to claims for overtime but in regard to other matters. Seeing that the Department has applications of that kind to deal with, is it any wonder that it makes investigation even in cases that are genuine, and declines at the outset to take them at their face value? You have to probe right down to the bottom of every case. Very frequently that takes a long time, and then the men get irritated because they think the Department is trying to put them off or take advantage. In the case referred to the correspondence extended over two months.

3. Did the Officers' Institute take up this case you refer to?—Yes. The other case the Officers' Institute was talking about was this: A train was due to leave Christchurch at about 11 o'clock on Saturday night. The men on duty at stations in the ordinary course had to finish their shift; the train was scheduled, and they had to work it. The connecting train, however, arrived an hour late, and the train got to Islington at 12.51 a.m. and left at 1.3 a.m., a little over an hour after midnight, and the men claimed pay for Sunday duty—one day's pay for a little over one hour's work. The Department refused the pay, and I submit it was a reasonable refusal to an unreasonable request. Now, sir, with regard to the question of bonuses paid