

the outset he found that the work at his new location was too much for him, and I am quite within the mark when I say that within a month from the time he was installed at this new station he practically asked the Department to take him out of it. We kept him there, however, for a further period on trial. He had some domestic worry at the time, and it was thought possible that a change of climate and change of scene would be beneficial and relieve his anxieties in that respect, and that as he got accustomed to the work he would find that he was able to undertake it. However, things went from bad to worse, and finally, at his most urgent solicitation—brought about, I may say, through his inability to do the work of this higher-grade station—the Department reluctantly had to remove and reduce him. He asked to be appointed to a certain station or given a clerkship, and was accordingly appointed to Dunedin. Although the work he was called upon to do was of a most routine nature, the Goods Agent was most dissatisfied with him. When the classification was altered, and the maximum rate of pay altered from £180 to £200 for grade 10, the Goods Agent advised that he was unable to recommend this man, and, furthermore, that the work he was doing and the way he was doing it showed distinctly that he was not worth more than £180 a year. That position continued as long as he was in the Dunedin goods office. Finally, on urgent representations and a very pathetic appeal to the Department, the General Manager was asked to agree that he should be given the appointment of Stationmaster at another country station on the South line. That was very reluctantly approved, and the man was sent to what was regarded as one of the easiest of railway-stations. Before he had been there very long he left the stop-blocks off the road and the main-line points unlocked during the busiest part of the day, to the danger of the line and traffic. The Department dealt with these matters, and then decided to take him off the main line and sent him to another country station at the end of a branch line, but still at £180, as he had not been recommended for any increase by his Managers. After he had been on the branch for some time he suffered a domestic bereavement, and was brought to the North Island, and he is still in this Island. Unfortunately, his work is not regarded as being satisfactory, and owing to the little shortcomings of this man we have had to take the matter up pretty severely with the Stationmaster. Inquiries made this year indicate that, although he does his best, he is not capable of fully undertaking the work of a tenth-grade clerk at other than an easy station. If a special place were found for him he could do certain work of a simple nature, but he could not undertake and satisfactorily fill the position of a man at £200 a year at a busy station. That, in brief, sir, is the position in regard to this particular case. I could have told the Committee that on Friday if the name had been given to me. I have known this officer personally for very many years, and have very deep sympathy and personal regard for him, but you cannot shut your eyes to the fact that he is getting all that he is worth.

DOUGLAS RAMSAY further examined. (No. 36.)

1. *The Chairman.*] I understand you desire to make a statement?—Yes. Before dealing with clause 19, I should like to mention that the last day we were before the Committee I asked Mr. Graham, when dealing with overtime, a question which might lead the Committee to believe that the officers were prepared to forego payment for overtime provided sick-leave to the extent of twenty-eight days was not deducted from their annual leave. In view of the cases quoted by Mr. Graham it would be unreasonable to expect them to agree to this. The officers intend, therefore, to adhere to clause (d) of the prayer of the petition. There was a case referred to by Mr. Graham—the Washdyke Station—and Mr. McVilly said he would make certain inquiries. In that connection, in order to assist Mr. McVilly, I should like, with the permission of the Committee, to read a letter from Mr. Williams to the District Traffic Manager, as follows: “17th May, 1911.—I beg to make application for time off once a week on account of the long hours and continuous time on duty. With the tablet now on both sides, and branch trains and numerous meat and stock specials to Smithfield, it is very difficult at times to get meals. For the past two months the hours have averaged about 81 per week. It does not matter what time Timaru wishes to run a special on to branch, I have to be here to open points. On Easter Monday, 17th April, I was on duty from 6.30 a.m. until 11.50 p.m. After finishing at 11.50 p.m. I was on again for M. 4 passenger special at 3 a.m., after having 3 hours 10 minutes off duty. As the time off was not sufficient to go home to bed, I had to sit in the office for fear of falling asleep and delaying train. Then, on Tuesday, 18th April, I was not released until 7.30 p.m., after being on since 3 a.m. Less meals, these two days made a total of 31 hours straight. I attach a statement of hours for Easter week and the previous week, which will give you a good idea of the times worked. Hoping to receive an early and favourable reply, yours obediently, R. H. Williams, S.M.” The statement shows that from the 10th to the 15th April, inclusive, the total time on duty was 89 hours 25 minutes, and actual time worked 77 hours. Easter week, 17th to 22nd April, total time on, 83 hours 35 minutes; and time worked, 75 hours 25 minutes. To that letter the District Traffic Manager replied: “19th May, 1911.—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.” Then, on the 26th May, Mr. Williams wrote to the Traffic Manager,—“I regret you cannot supply regular relief, but perhaps you could arrange with the S.M., Timaru, to let me off a few hours occasionally when I wish to run into Timaru on private business. A porter who could work the tablet would be sufficient. He could put in his odd time between trains in cleaning the station. It is impossible to leave the station, as there is generally some train on the tablet sections, and at times I find difficulty in getting time to light my signals, the branch home and north home both being a quarter of a mile from the station.” Then, on the 27th May the District Traffic Manager wrote in reply, “That is much the same thing. I cannot give you what other S.M.s cannot have.”