

*The Chairman:* This question as to whether a man is married or not must be left to the Committee. The witness stated that on the occasion he was relieving he was single.

*Mr. McVilly:* I wanted to know whether we were discussing the question of whether a man was single or married, and that is why I was asking the question.

*The Chairman:* You can put the question to him.

43. *Mr. McVilly.]* If a man is married he has not got to pay 10s. to retain his room?—No, but he has got to pay perhaps anything up to £1 10s. a week for rent.

44. Would he not pay that £1 10s. for rent irrespective of whether he was a relieving officer or not?—Yes, if he was at home; but then he would live at home and not incur additional expenses.

45. The additional expenses you have already stated. If your board is £1 2s. 6d. per week and you get £2 2s., then you have a margin of 19s. 6d. to meet contingencies?—But you would have rent to pay, and there is cab-hire and other things.

46. Is it not a fact that cab-hire is charged for separately?—I understood that you got 10s. a night for the first three nights. I have never put in a charge for cab-hire.

47. That is a contingency recognized by the Department and charged for separately?—Not in my case.

48. Do you know a case where you have charged portorage or cab-hire that the Department has objected? If you can state any such cases state them?—I will state them when it is time.

49. I will ask you to state, Mr. McPherson, any cases in which relieving officers have claimed for payment of portorage and cab-hire and the Department has objected?—Well, if you turn up the records you will find it has been so. I believe it is on record in the Head Office. It would be as well if the Committee could get some of the cases or files if we are going to deal with it in this way.

50. Can you state a case in which a *bona fide* charge for portorage or cab-hire has ever been stuck up when claimed by a relieving officer?—I cannot say from memory, but I have heard of cases which I believe were *bona fide*. If we thought we were coming before the Committee to discuss this question we should have made further inquiries as to what has been done.

51. You do not surely wish to imply that you have come unprepared to discuss a question which you set out in your petition?—No.

52. You are talking now about the question of the sufficiency of the allowance?—That is so.

53. Well, this matter I am suggesting to you must have suggested itself to you?—It has been suggested that Railway men shall have no luxuries, and I am quite sure if we had gone into the matter certain officers could have mentioned instances. Speaking for myself, the Department has never once stuck up anything, but I do not know that I have ever included cab-hires. I would not be sure. I have no feeling in the matter at all.

54. You have no personal knowledge of any such items having been stuck up?—That is so.

55. If the charge of £2 2s. covers all expenses, why should it be increased?—Why should it be reduced, as it was?

56. That is not the question. You are addressing yourself to the question of the sufficiency of the amount. This amount has been admitted by you to be sufficient to cover expenses, and why should the Department throw away money by increasing the allowance?—I am not asking the Department to throw away money.

57. You are complaining of the insufficiency of the allowance, and you are asking that it should be increased to the same as the Post officers are allowed. You admitted that two guineas was sufficient to cover expenses, and why should the expenses be increased to more than meet the out-of-pocket expenses?—I answered that question in my opening, and I said that if the Department expected us to uphold the dignity of the Department, and get the respect and esteem of the public, they must pay us a sufficient allowance to enable us to live in proper quarters.

58. You have stated that you always lived in proper quarters?—That is so.

59. And you have admitted that the allowance is sufficient to cover expenses. I want you to give us some reason why this amount should be increased?—I admitted that when I was a relieving officer I got a certain allowance which was sufficient, but that allowance has been reduced since then.

60. But you admitted that £2 2s. a week more than covered what it cost you?—Did I say two guineas? Pardon me, I did not say that. The reason that it should be increased is that at certain places the tariff is 8s. per day. That is the lowest. Then you have other expenses which the Railway man has to pay, owing to irregular hours and the conditions of his work. For instance, I had to pay for being called early. I did not always depend on the alarm clock, and if I had not been on duty at the proper time I should have been fined. I do not know whether I could have been forced to pay for that, but I had to pay to get my meals at hours that would meet the requirements of the Department.

61. Then, at those houses where they charge 8s. per day, what is the tariff per week?—I could not say.

62. Do you mean to suggest that a man going to a place and staying for fourteen or twenty days would pay 8s. per day?—Yes, if he went to an 8s.-a-day house.

63. Is it not a fact that officers who go relieving invariably make inquiries the first thing as to the terms on which they are going to stay?—No, it is not a fact, so far as my personal experience was concerned.

64. Well, are you suggesting that a man who goes into a hotel and is going to stay for fourteen days does not make any inquiries?—Yes, I have done that repeatedly. I have considered that my position as a Railway man I had a certain status and position which I was bound to keep up.

65. Is it within your personal knowledge that it is the practice for hotelkeepers in different parts of the Dominion to put this question to the men when settling up the bill, "Is this Government or yourself"?—No. I can only speak from personal knowledge, and it has never in my experience been the case. You are now trying to suggest something which I have no right to answer.

66. How long were you relieving officer?—I should say, for nine months.