

however, these facilities can be efficiently given by the present public offices, without the large expenditure which a separate establishment is certain to involve, we are of opinion that this department should be abolished with the least possible delay. At the same time we recognize the advantage of railway officers being instructed in telegraphy.

At Dunedin we found an officer, receiving £600 a year, called a Locomotive Engineer, who informed us in his evidence that his business was not to inspect the working engines and discover that they required repair, for which duty a distinct officer is employed. This engineer, who admits that he had no practical experience of locomotives previous to his appointment, is paid £600 a year to go into the locomotive shop with an engine that has been found to require repair, and instruct the long-experienced locomotive foreman what to do with it. Unnecessary officers.

In Nelson we found a gentleman in receipt of £425 a year as Manager of Railways, there being less than twenty miles of railway, on which only two trains a day are running; whilst neither the inspector of permanent way nor the engineers in a roofless workshop appear to have taken or required any instructions from him. In the same city we found a Railway Storekeeper receiving £160 a year, but who had no stores and no office. We believe that the supposed duties of both these gentlemen might be advantageously added to the exceedingly small demands made on the energies of the Nelson station-master, who should be a man of sufficient intelligence and experience to be intrusted with the general control of that short line with its very small traffic.

On the Kaipara Branch, with its sixteen miles of railway, an Assistant Manager receives £300 a year for duties that ought to be performed by the chief station-master. Neither the receipts of that line nor the amount of traffic on it justify the present outlay.

The Manager at Christchurch states, in his evidence, that entirely unnecessary gates are there maintained at railway-crossings for the purpose of giving employment to old railway-servants. With such examples cropping up on the surface, and disclosed by a hasty investigation, there can be little doubt that a large number of unnecessary officers could be dispensed with by a head of the department really wishing to reduce expenditure. A good head would discover more.

The great variety of locomotive engines used on the lines (no less than sixteen different kinds) gives rise to many inconveniences, and adds much to the difficulty and cost of repairs. The efforts naturally made by each maker to get his own pattern introduced to the colony have been too freely responded to by those who should have protected it from such a serious addition to the cost of patterns, duplicates, and repairs. Too many kinds of locomotives.

We found in connection with the working of this line a large staff employed by the Railway Department as contractors for collection and delivery of goods. This system, though possibly necessary under existing conditions, is one open to the serious objection of throwing upon the Government a considerable amount of additional work for the public. We are of opinion that the tendency in this direction should be checked. Admitting the necessity for the working of the lines being carried on by the Government, we think it very desirable that the many evils which follow from their employing so large a proportion of the population should be recognized, and every effort made to reduce this to a minimum. We have neither had time nor opportunity to thoroughly inquire into this question, but we consider it one deserving of the careful consideration of the Minister for Public Works. It appears to us quite possible that a plan may be devised by which the large staff now required in connection with the goods traffic may be considerably reduced, while at the same time the public convenience may be better served without increased cost. Government should avoid business.

The wanton destruction of tarpaulins in consequence of the absence of a few simple precautions in their use, and allowing them to be taken for the most undesirable purposes, and leaving them to be lost or stolen without being missed, alone forms a serious item in our railway expenditure. In some parts of the colony we found heaps of unprotected stores going to destruction, and in others the same kind of stores being purchased from private merchants, or manufactured at an excessive cost. The most culpable facilities are offered for dishonest appropriation. There is no real Careless waste.