

4. Yes; it must be something like the case of a ship at sea: men may sometimes have four or five hours in which they have nothing to do?—Yes. A man would have to oil his engine and so on when standing. The fireman or driver must be alongside, except in a station where there is a Foreman. At a large number of stations there are Foremen in charge of the engine-sheds; and in that case, when an engine was standing there, the fireman and driver may be released entirely.

5. Then one man could be away at any place where the engine was standing for several hours?—Yes; they arrange it between themselves, and, when the engine is in a shed where there is a Foreman, both of them can be away for a specific time.

6. How long before the engine started would they have to be back?—About half an hour.

7. Under whose authority are they in the interval?—It depends on where they are. If they were at a country station they would be under the Stationmaster. As far as the engine is concerned, the driver is responsible. They would not have to apply to the Stationmaster for leave for one of them to leave the engine.

8. So long as they agree between themselves about the engine, one of them can go?—Yes, the driver would settle this; but he would inquire of the Stationmaster whether they were wanted or not. They might have to do station or other work; in that case they would get overtime if worked.

9. Is it necessary for the proper conduct of the service that drivers or firemen should be removed to other places temporarily or permanently?—There have been many cases in which removals were necessary, but I do not think it will happen so often in the future. We could not have avoided the removals that have taken place. We had a large number of men to get rid of, and had to put suitable men in different places. We had more men than we wanted at the time. In 1880 I went South to see into this matter, and I considered it desirable that there should be some changes. In future they will not occur to such an extent. Certainly I hope we shall get into a more settled condition in time, and so many changes will not be necessary.

10. With respect to increase of pay, are the regulations adhered to?—Yes, pretty fairly. We keep a list of the men, and increases are made subject to certain conditions as to good conduct and so on. If there is anything against a man, such as insubordination or bad conduct, he does not get an increase so soon. A man must have a clean sheet for six months to entitle him to an increase—that is, free from all punishable complaints.

11. If any serious complaint is made against a man, has he any chance of rebutting it?—Every case is inquired into, more or less. For minor offences the local officer inquires; but if it is a serious accident, or anything of that sort, then probably all three of the sub-departments are concerned, and would be engaged in the inquiry—the traffic department, the locomotive department, and the maintenance. If a man fails to attend to his engine, and it breaks down on the road, it may be that the only person to inquire is the Foreman, and on his report, if it is right, the Locomotive Superintendent will adjudge whether the man is to be blamed or not. The cases are so numerous that there could not be a full inquiry into all the minor ones.

12. But in anything seriously affecting a man's character would he have a chance of giving his view?—Yes, certainly; if it is a serious offence, involving a man being put down or dismissed, it would be reported to me. A man cannot be unjustly dealt with without an opportunity of inquiry, and if the circumstances are serious he can petition the Minister, and then can state the whole case, and bring up anything he has to say. Many cases go before the Minister.

13. And how does he decide?—I think, in most of the cases I can remember now, the Minister has decided that the men have been justly dealt with.

14. And that the men were in the wrong?—Yes. We do not like to dismiss a man if we can help it; it gives much inconvenience.

15. About an engine breaking down, is it not examined before it leaves?—The driver is responsible for examining his engine. It is not necessarily examined by any other person. It would not do to relieve the driver of the responsibility of having his engine in order.

16. Was it not a rule of the department that it should be examined by some one else?—No; it is the driver's business to point out any defect. There is an inspection in the larger stations, where the Foreman examines all engines. He cannot examine every engine every day, but the drivers have to point out defects.

17. It is said here that where a man met with an accident in the execution of his duty he was formerly allowed half-pay, which is now stopped?—No; they are allowed half-pay for three months, and quarter-pay for three months more, so that the statement is not correct. These statements are very general. I am not aware of any case in which a man has been injured in the service, if from circumstances beyond his own control, who has not got his allowance. There was one case brought before me in which I disallowed it. If the accident arose through carelessness or breaking the rules, he would not get the allowance.

18. *Mr. White.*] Why did you mention that there are 280 drivers in the service, seeing that this petition only comes from the South Island?—The department must be treated as a whole. I cannot consider any particular lot of men alone. I cannot make any difference between men at Invercargill and men at Auckland, if the circumstances are the same.

19. Is there any difference on the West Coast?—Yes, a little. Greymouth and Westport are exceptionally treated. You cannot get men to work in those two particular places except for higher pay.

20. Wages being higher in the South Island than in the North, you would have to pay your men in the South Island more than in the North to make their pay the same as outside pay?—My information is that wages are pretty uniform throughout the colony.

21. Does not the return from your department show that wages are lower in the North Island than in the South?—I think not; it is pretty uniform. In Nelson, however, some men are paid as low as 5s. a day.

22. Can you say for certain that this report does not show that in the North Island wages are considerably lower than in the South?—Speaking from information, I think not. I was struck with