

Time does not allow of my going into the detail of the train-services submitted in this paragraph. I think the average time worked by each gang, which I have returned, gives a correct view of the case. The time-table hours quoted are too vague to follow. I am aware of one case in which a gang was on duty on and off thirty-six hours. I never heard of another. Special circumstances led to this, but such a case certainly should under no circumstances be allowed to occur.

STANDING TIME.

Petitioners' statement.

4. That with reference to standing time, your humble petitioners respectfully draw attention to this column in the haulage sheets, for, although shown as standing time, the most arduous duties in connection with the engine have to be done—coaling, watering, oiling, packing, trimming, the fire cleaned, smoke-box emptied, lamps trimmed, ash-pan cleaned; if possible, engine turned, &c., &c. Should the day be a long one, this time, although occupied, is deducted from them.

Your humble petitioners feel this is very unfair, as Rule 324 states that an engine in steam "must on no account be left by both Driver and Fireman at the same time (for however short a time)," so that they are on duty the whole of the time from coming on until the engine returns to the shed. The day's work even then is by no means finished, as a most important part remains to be completed. This is the daily return of mileage, haulage, and stores consumed by the engine. To most of them this is the most difficult portion of the day's work, as they do not lay any pretensions to clerical skill. There are fourteen different classes of vehicles, and it must be shown where a vehicle is taken on and at what station put off. This is a most awkward task to perform correctly, as the different classes have to be specified; a long train or a dark night does not exempt them, and the difficulty is apparent when only two or three minutes are allowed at a station. They are liable to be, and have been, fined for an error of even one vehicle. In no other part of the globe is this asked, or expected, from Enginenemen. These sheets take them over an hour on the average, no time being allowed for this, and only thirty minutes for getting the engine ready before the train starts. This, to say the least, is arbitrary, for it is impossible to do the work under an hour.

The Fireman is on duty forty-five minutes before the train starts. (See Rule 313.) He is not paid for more than thirty minutes. (It is evident that this rule has been taken from a Home regulation. The men there are relieved from duty, and persons appointed to turn the engine and coal and water it. This takes at least thirty minutes.) Then there is the oiling and other incidental duties to be performed, and the engine to get on to the train some minutes before its departure.

Mr. Maxwell's remarks.

4. The duties described in this paragraph are somewhat over-estimated. They are light. The cleaners do all the heavy work cleaning, and the coalmen that of the coaling. Turning the hose into the tanks to fill them with water is an operation known to most people; it is not a severe task.

The return complained of is not anything very serious, and the jotting down the particulars is done as the driver passes through the stations; he has no computations to perform. We cannot dispense with these reports; but I will observe the matter particularly, and relieve them of any superfluous work which is possible.

RULES.

Petitioners' statement.

5. That your humble petitioners show the arbitrary and harsh manner in which the rules and regulations are construed, is felt to be an injustice, their superiors interpreting them as it best suits their purpose. For instance, Rule 378 states that an engine must not run more than ten miles an hour, tender first. In many instances, when running passenger trains, the driver, in order to run to time, has to travel twenty miles per hour, and yet is unable to obtain a written order; thus, in case of an accident, the onus would rest with him.

Rule 315 provides a complete set of tools for each engine. This is seldom the case. A driver on a strange engine, meeting with a break-down, would thus be liable to be severely dealt with for incompetency or being dilatory, whereas it is no fault of his, but the requisite tools are wanting.

Rule 338 states that Engine-drivers must, if practicable, have their engine-boilers washed out every seventh day; and he is responsible for the work that is necessary to be done on wash-out days. On some portions of the section (Christchurch, for instance) a driver very rarely washes out his own engine.

Rule 339 says: Enginenemen, when not required on the line, are to be employed in the shop. Instead of this, it has been customary in Christchurch to book men off—that is, their pay is stopped for the day. Your petitioners are convinced that in no other portion of the Civil Service is this system carried out.

Rule 344, relative to signals, states that, when at danger, no train or engine must pass them; yet this is often done, without anything but verbal orders to do so. In case of anything going wrong, the Driver would be blamed.

Mr. Maxwell's remarks.

5. The complaints are not well founded, as a Driver would not be held responsible where he had not means to turn the engine; but it is an objectionable state of things that turntables should not be available. It has been the subject of many representations by the department, and is now being amended.

If a Driver does not report want of tools he is to blame: he knows it is his business to do so.

Rule 338. The complaint seems frivolous.

Rule 339. Gives the department power to employ these hands in the shops when located at them; but, as the shops are confined to two places, Addington and Hillside, obviously the men could not be sent there.

Rule 344. The Driver who has done this has neglected his duty in not reporting the breach of rule to his superior, as the rules require.

REMOVING.

Petitioners' statement.

6. Your petitioners most humbly show that this is anything but conducive to habits of thrift or economy, as removing them from one place to another necessitates the sacrifice of their homes, that have taken them years of pinching to gather together. Many of them have members of their families employed, and removing does not alter their habits or ability, inasmuch as they can only do their duty wherever their location may be.

Mr. Maxwell's remarks.

6. *Removal.*—Men are bound to be sent where the service requires. If they become the servants of the public they must put up with these disadvantages.

SCALE OF PAY.

Petitioners' statement.

7. That your humble petitioners court inquiry into one of the most flagrant acts of injustice that they have had to submit to, viz., the manner in which they have been treated relative to a scale that was submitted to and accepted by them. This has been of late all but ignored, for, whereas it provided that 25 per cent. of the Drivers received the maximum pay of 13s. per day, only one or two receive it. The annual increase of 6d. a day has seldom been given, *when due*, to either Drivers or Firemen. They feel this all the more, as most of them joined the service years ago under these conditions, and they have never received a general order repudiating their increase. It would appear to rest entirely on the whim and caprice of the Locomotive Superintendent, who, in many cases, visits slight and frivolous offences with the harshest severity—fining them; and often, in addition to that, stopping the increase for twelve months.