

1911.  
NEW ZEALAND

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# RAILWAYS COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF) ON THE PETITION OF THE AMALGAMATED SOCIETY OF RAILWAY SERVANTS;  
TOGETHER WITH THE PETITION, DEPARTMENTAL REPORT, AND MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

(MR. HOGAN, CHAIRMAN.)

*Report brought up on the 27th October, 1911, and ordered to be printed.*

## ORDER OF REFERENCE.

*Extract from the Journals of the House of Representatives.*

FRIDAY, THE 4TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1911.

*Ordered*, "That a Committee be appointed, consisting of ten members, to examine and report upon questions relating to the railways; with power to call for persons and papers: three to be a quorum: the Committee to consist of Mr. Arnold, Mr. Brown, Mr. Buick, Mr. Craigie, Mr. Hine, Mr. Hogan, Mr. Rhodes, Mr. Ross, Mr. Witty, and the mover."—(Hon. Mr. MILLAR.)

## PETITION.

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives of the Dominion of New Zealand in Parliament assembled.

THE petition of the AMALGAMATED SOCIETY OF RAILWAY SERVANTS' INDUSTRIAL UNION OF WORKERS, for and on behalf of itself the said society and members thereof, humbly sheweth,—

That your petitioner now desires to withdraw the petition presented to your honourable House in the session of 1910, and substitute the following:—

That your petitioner is the society referred to in section 121 of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, 1908, as the "Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants." That your petitioner has from time to time made representations on various matters respecting the regulations governing the service, conditions of employment, and other matters of vital importance to its members, without redress. We therefore humbly pray that your honourable House will consider the various matters stated and set forth in the petition, and say whether our claims in these respects are just and reasonable.

### *Wages.*

We desire,—

1. That a 10 per cent. increase in wages shall be granted to all branches of the Railway service throughout the Second Division.
2. That men termed "hour-to-hour casuals" be paid not less than 1s. 3d. per hour and given the usual privileges.
3. That all men engaged in shunting operations be paid as shunters.
4. That the Classification Act be amended so as to maintain the full percentages in both grades.
5. That when a man is brought on duty he be paid not less than half a day's pay.
6. That 6d. per day tool allowance be granted to carpenters.

*Hours.*

7. That forty-eight hours shall constitute a week's work for all grades of the service, and that overtime rates be paid for all time worked in excess of these hours. Gangers and surfacemen's time to count from trolley stand to trolley stand.

8. That not less than nine hours be allowed off duty between shifts in the train-running departments.

9. That each day's work shall stand by itself so far as the Workshops Branch is concerned.

10. That Way and Works men be paid wet or dry and for all time travelling under the Department's instructions, and when finished their week's work be allowed to travel home by the first available train.

11. That intermittent time be abolished—*i.e.*, that members shall not be booked on and off duty at short intervals, thus spreading their day's work over twelve and fourteen hours, for which they receive no additional pay.

12. That fifteen minutes' additional time be allowed for preparing and putting away engines. This is not to include engines engaged in regular shunting-work.

13. That all guards be booked on duty at least thirty minutes before the departure time of their trains.

*Allowances.*

14. That lodging-allowance be paid according to Regulations 44, 45, and 46.

15. That the words "sleeping accommodation" in Regulations 44 and 45 be defined by Parliament.

16. That paragraph 6 of Regulation 55 be struck out.

17. That Regulation 73 be struck out.

18. That when members are transferred at the convenience of the Department all expenses incurred be defrayed by the Department on production of vouchers.

19. That ten days' leave be granted to all members of the Second Division, and that one additional day be granted for each five years' service after fifteen years.

20. That all passes and privileges given to members be of equal value.

21. That the free passes formerly issued to members' wives and housekeepers be restored, and the words "privilege ticket" in Regulation 59 be struck out, and the words "free passes" substituted.

*Appointments.*

22. That Parliament, in the interest of the men and for the public safety, lay down the principle that guards shall be appointed from shunters, signalmen, and storemen, and that no one shall be appointed to the position of guard who is not a competent shunter.

22A. That men employed on dining-cars and in Government railway sawmills be placed on the permanent staff, and given the same privileges and right to appeal as other members of the service.

23. That the promise made by the Hon. Hall-Jones to place casuals of over five years' service on the permanent staff be given effect to.

24. That juniors who have served their period of probation shall be placed on the D.-3 list according to length of service.

*Punishments.*

25. That Parliament consider and define the time a man shall be kept under suspension and awaiting the decision of the Department.

26. That the method and severity of punishments meted out to railway men be considered by Parliament.

*Superannuation.*

27. That the benefits of the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act shall not in any way interfere with the benefits derived under the Government Railways Superannuation Fund.

28. That Parliament give members who retire or may be dismissed the right to continue their payments into the Superannuation Fund and participate in the benefits, seeing that in many instances they are too old to join the National Provident Fund or make other provision for old age.

29. That Parliament consider amending the Government Railways Superannuation Fund in the direction of providing for the widow and family of a retired member.

*Departmental Inquiries and Appeal Boards.*

30. That the decision of the Appeal Board be final.

31. That the constitution of departmental Boards of inquiry be so altered as to give members of the Second Division representation on the same, and the right to be represented by an independent outside advocate.

32. That appellants going before the Appeal Board have the right to be represented by an independent outside advocate.

*General.*

33. That all regulations embodying questions of principle be incorporated in the Classification Act.

34. That the division barrier in the Railway service be abolished, and that equal opportunity to rise be given to all.

35. That all guards be supplied with a mileage table from any station to any station to enable them to compute fares and charges on goods and parcels correctly.

36. That the uniforms be restored to shunters and goods-shed porters.

37. That full civil and political rights be granted to all Railway servants

38. That preference to unionists be given both in the employment and reduction of staff in the New Zealand Railways.

This petition is presented to your honourable House in pursuance of a resolution of the executive council passed on the 9th day of August, 1911. Therefore your petitioner prays that they may be heard by its officers and executive council and by witnesses before the Railways Committee, or any other Committee of your honourable House to which the hereinbefore petition may be referred.

And your petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

W. A. VEITCH, President.	
M. J. MACK, Secretary.	
R. HAMPTON	} Councillors.
W. T. WILSON	
E. J. DASH	
R. MOORE	
G. S. FROST	
F. HUTCHINS	
J. W. JULL	
J. CHURCHOUSE	

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## DEPARTMENTAL REPORT.

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New Zealand Government Railways, Head Office,  
Wellington, 17th October, 1911.

SIR,—

With reference to the petition of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (No. 69, returned herewith), I have to report that very many matters brought under the notice of the Department by the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants have been adjusted, and concessions have been granted whenever it has been practicable to do so. There are, however, as the petitioners state, cases in which representations have been made on matters in respect to which the Department has not been able to give the relief sought.

With respect to—

1. Any increase in wages would involve very heavy expense on the Department.
2. The payment of a rate of 1s. 3d. per hour to casuals will still further increase the operating-expenses of the Department. So far as privileges are concerned, goods-shed casuals who are paid at a rate per hour and who are employed not less than twenty-four hours per week are granted privilege tickets for themselves and wives.
3. This is a further request for increasing the operating-expenses of the Department. Investigations are being made as a result of previous representations by the society, and it is intended to go comprehensively into the matter as soon as all the necessary data has been obtained.
4. It is the invariable practice to maintain the full percentages in both grades.
5. Where men are booked to come on duty and it is subsequently found that they are not required, the practice is to send word to their homes accordingly. In the event of the men arriving on duty before receiving word, they are paid for the time actually worked. Where they do not work no time is paid for. I am unable to recommend any alteration in this practice.
6. The payment of tool allowance to carpenters would involve the Department in very considerable expense. The Department has already arranged that men in its employ can obtain tools at wholesale prices through the Stores Department, and this will enable them to effect a saving in respect to any tools they require.
7. The general practice throughout the Dominion is that where the work is continuous, such as the larger centres, forty-eight hours is recognized as constituting a week's work. Where the duties are intermittent the staff are expected to work as required, provided the actual time worked does not exceed nine hours per day. Time off is given as opportunity offers in respect to overtime worked. Gangers and surfacemen working over four miles away from their homes commence work fifteen minutes later and finish fifteen minutes earlier than the regulation hours. For every mile over four miles distant from home five minutes additional is allowed both morning and evening.
8. The general practice of the Department is not to book men on for duty until after they have had a period of eight hours rest. It has, however, been found on investigation made as a result of recent representations that the Department's intentions in this direction have not always been given effect to by the local officers. Instructions have, however, now been given that where men who are running late trains arrive so late at their destination as to be unable to obtain eight hours rest before being again booked on, arrangements are to be made so as to enable them to obtain eight hours rest before resuming duty.
9. Men employed in the workshops are required to work forty-eight hours per week before overtime rates are paid. I am not prepared to recommend compliance with the request.
10. All permanent-way men are now paid full time in wet or dry weather. Members of the works staff are paid half-time for time lost through wet weather.
11. I am not prepared to recommend compliance with this request. Where the duties are light it necessarily follows that they must be spread over a longer or shorter period of the day according to the exigencies of the public service.

12. As a result of representations made by the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, exhaustive tests were made as to the actual time required for preparing and putting away locomotives, and the time-allowance now granted is considered to be ample for the purpose, and I am unable to see my way to recommend any extension.

13. The practice is to book guards on duty at least thirty minutes before the departure of their trains at busy stations and depots. In other cases time-allowance is granted according to the circumstances, each case being considered on its merits and determined by the local officer, sufficient time being allowed the guards to perform all necessary duties.

14. Lodging-allowance is already paid in accordance with Regulations 44, 45, and 46.

15. Sleeping-accommodation provided by the Department comprises a hut or other building suitable for members to lodge in.

16. This clause of the regulation is necessary, and I cannot recommend compliance with the request.

17. Regulation 73 simply gives effect to what has been the practice of the Department since the inception of the railways, and is essential.

18. The expenses of members transferred at the convenience of and to suit the exigencies of the Department are defrayed in terms of Regulation 48.

19. I regret I am unable to recommend compliance with this request. It involves a large expenditure.

20. The original arrangement in respect to passes was to grant members of the First Division first-class and members of the Second Division second-class passes. In 1896 this arrangement was altered, and first-class passes were granted to all members of the service; but a year or so afterwards the original practice was reverted to, owing to complaints from passengers respecting the railway staff monopolizing all the first-class accommodation.

21. Arrangements have already been made to grant free passes to members of the Railway service who are living in isolated places, to enable them to purchase all stores.

22. The Department already has this matter under consideration.

22A. Men employed in the dining-cars and railway sawmills are granted leave of absence, free passes, and privilege tickets in terms of the regulations. I am not, however, prepared to recommend that such men be placed on the permanent staff of the Department.

23. Effect has already been given to the promise made by the Hon. W. Hall-Jones as far as could be done. All men who were eligible under the Railway Regulations have been appointed to the permanent staff.

24. The position of juniors on the D.-3 is determined by the Government Railways Act, and they cannot be placed according to length of service.

25. All cases of punishment in which a man is suspended are dealt with as expeditiously as possible. Generally speaking, they involve the holding of inquiries, and afterwards the evidence has to be fully considered and adjudicated on by the Punishment Board. Men are not kept suspended any longer than can be avoided.

26. Punishments for offences committed by members of the Railway staff are made as light as the circumstances will permit.

27. Section 89 of the Government Railways Act covers this request. What is asked by this clause is a double benefit. This cannot be recommended.

28. This, in effect, is asking that members who have retired from the Railway service should be allowed to continue as contributors to the Superannuation Fund and afterwards participate in its benefits. I regret I cannot recommend compliance with this request.

29. The Government Railways Superannuation Fund is already carrying the maximum liability. This proposal, if given effect to, would increase the load of the fund. I therefore recommend that the request be declined.

30. This is a question of Government policy.

31. Departmental Boards of inquiry when set up are invariably composed of officers who have no connection whatever with the person at fault or the matter to be investigated. I am unable to recommend the adoption of either of the suggestions in this clause.

32. I am not prepared to recommend compliance with this request.

33. It is quite impracticable to embody in the Classification Act regulations for the working of the Department, the conditions of which alter every day.

34. In every walk of life a line of demarcation is drawn between the men who are directing the operations and those who are carrying them out, and it is not advisable to depart from this principle in the Railway service.

35. This matter has been under the consideration of the Department for some time, and the society has already been advised that arrangements have been made for supplying distance-tables as soon as they can be prepared.

36. Arrangements have already been made to supply shunters and goods-shed porters with uniforms.

37. I am not prepared, in the interests of the men themselves, to recommend any extension of the civil and political rights now enjoyed by members of the Railway service.

38. While the Department has no objection to members of the Railway service belonging to the various Railway unions, I regret my inability to recommend compliance with the request to give preference to unionists in the matter of employment or reduction of staff. A Government service must be open to all members of the community who can comply with the regulations laid down in respect to employment, and quite irrespective of whether they are unionists or non-unionists.

I have, &c.,

T. RONAYNE,  
General Manager.

## REPORT.

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REPORT on the PETITIONS (Nos. 637/10 and 69/11) of the AMALGAMATED SOCIETY OF RAILWAY SERVANTS, praying for consideration with regard to conditions of employment, wages, and other matters.

I AM directed to report that this Committee, having had the petition of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants before it, and having met the representatives of that society in conference and heard representations from them, recommends that the Government set up a Board or Commission to inquire into the petition of the Second Division of the Railway Service, with a view to recommending the best method of removing any grievances or anomalies that exist.

27th October, 1911.

JAS. T. HOGAN, Chairman.

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## MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

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TUESDAY, 17TH OCTOBER, 1911.

*The Chairman:* Well, the question is now whether we should deal with the petition from the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, and the question raises a point which should be considered by the Committee. You have all, no doubt, seen what appeared in the Press: a wire was sent down to the men at Addington, and evidently an improper or false construction was placed on that wire.

*Mr. Witty:* Not by the men.

*The Chairman:* Well, by the representative of the Press, who caused a Press Association wire to be sent up here, and it was made to appear that the Government could decide either to go on with this petition or leave it alone. Well, of course, this Committee knows as well as I do that it is for the Committee to regulate its own business and not for the Government, and consequently it is for this Committee to say whether that petition should be gone on with this session or not. While I was away in Wanganui it was thought advisable to call the Committee together, but whether that was done after consultation with the majority of the members of the Committee or not I am not in a position to say.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* No, it was called together owing to representations made in the House that we were deliberately trying to block the Second Division from being heard before this Committee. My attention was drawn to the matter two or three times, and I said in the House that a meeting of the Committee had been called for the Tuesday, which I understood to be the case. I appealed to Mr. Witty, and he nodded his head to say that that was so. My recollection was that a meeting was called for 10.30 a.m. on the Tuesday, and I said the men would be given an opportunity of stating their grievances when the Committee met, as their petition was before the Committee. I did not think we would have taken four weeks to deal with the petition from the First Division. After I stated that in the House Mr. Otterson informed me that the Committee had not been called together for the Tuesday, and I then asked Mr. Otterson to instruct the clerk to call the members of the Committee together. I never interfered with the work of the Committee at all.

*The Chairman:* Well, the position was that when we adjourned last the next meeting of the Committee was to be called by the Chairman. Then the notice calling the meeting was handed to me just as it was to other members, and I did not know how the Committee had been called together. The result is that we are here, and some members who have presented petitions have been asked to hurriedly take charge of them and bring them before the Committee without having proper notice. However, regarding this petition from the Second Division, after the experience we have had with the First Division it is questionable whether we could do anything with the Second Division petition. In view of what has happened, and in view of the statements that have been made to the public, I think this Committee ought to come to a definite decision as to whether it will go on with this petition or not. If we have only a week to consider it, it is simply a farce to go on with the Second Division petition.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* It depends entirely on the men themselves. If they like to put one man up to deal with the petition and then for the Department to give its reply, the Committee will be able to deal with the whole thing. I know, and every member of the Committee knows, that it is impossible to go through the petition clause by clause. We are quite prepared to give them the same consideration as was given to the First Division, but they cannot expect to call evidence to deal with each clause and then for the Committee to report this year.

*The Chairman:* They have every right to take up all the time necessary for placing their views before this Committee, but it is ridiculous to think that they can exercise the rights which they possess in a week. They would not only be wasting our time but wasting their own time, and would it not be better to say definitely that it would be advisable not to consider this petition this year?

*Mr. Witty:* I move, "That the Committee hear the petitioners, and that the petitioners be informed that the end of the session is near, and that if they can condense their evidence we shall be only too glad to hear them." We should also give them the opportunity of saying whether they think it advisable to go on or not. It should be explained to them that we expect the House

to close this week, and if they are agreeable to go on under those circumstances and we can get through, well and good. If, on the other hand, they prefer not to go on with the petition this session, it clears us, but I think we should give them the opportunity of being heard. They should be informed that owing to the limited time it will be impossible for the Committee to go into every detail, and then the deputation should be allowed to please themselves whether they will go on or not.

*Mr. V. Brown:* Before that is decided I should like to make a statement as to what our position is with regard to the First Division. We have taken all the evidence, but it is not yet all printed, and we have to deliberate on that petition. We must report to Parliament on the petition of the First Division, and we must have a couple of days to deliberate in regard to our report. I do not know what your ideas are, sir, but I should like you to express an opinion as to what you propose to do in connection with the petition of the First Division.

*The Chairman:* Well, we propose to deliberate on it.

*Mr. V. Brown:* Then, if we proceed with the hearing of the petition of the Second Division, there will be no time to consider the other one.

*The Chairman:* By putting the hearing of their evidence off for a day or two, it would enable us to deliberate on the evidence placed before us by the First Division.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* You are going to place the Committee in a very false position. You are going to put it in the hands of the Railway men to say that we deliberately refused to go on with the petition which we had in our hands for three months although we had a week to deal with it. I do not want to put myself as Minister in that position, nor do I want to see the Committee put in that position, and the only alternative will be to simply report to the House that the time at our disposal has not given us an opportunity to report on this petition. I think we should say that the Committee proposes to go on with the petition of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants.

*Mr. McLaren:* Being in charge of the petition, I should like to explain that I have not been able to meet the representatives this morning, and I do not know whether it is their desire to give evidence or not, but I think they should be heard this morning and the position put plainly before them.

*The Chairman:* The reason I want a resolution is this: The Press has been publishing statements that make it appear to the public that the Government is running this Committee, but the Government is not running this Committee, and neither is the Minister. We know, and the Minister knows, that by the tone of the wire that came up from Christchurch it would appear that the Government was running this Committee. Unless we put on record a resolution that we are going to hear the evidence in support of this petition, it will appear that we are going to hear it at the instigation of the Government.

*Mr. Hine:* I do not think the Minister has been quite fair, and the Committee has taken a wrong conception of the whole position, because, to my mind, there has been Ministerial interference. Mr. Millar himself admits that he authorized the calling of this meeting this morning.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Simply because the Chairman was not available.

*Mr. Hine:* It appears to me, Mr. Chairman, that if it had been deemed desirable last night after the remarks in the House to have the Committee called together I should have said it was quite right, and a majority of the members of the Committee could have arranged it, but it is going to be put before the public that there has not been any Ministerial interference, and I contend that there has been. I say that the Minister authorized the calling of this meeting without the consent of the Committee.

*Mr. V. Brown:* I was present in the House last night, and probably was one of those who caused this meeting to be called. Statements had been made by Mr. Hine, Mr. Witty, and Mr. Davey, and the question of when the next meeting of the Committee was to take place was brought up in the House. Mr. Millar said he thought it was for Tuesday, and at the same time looked round to Mr. Witty and myself, and I said "Yes, we meet again on Tuesday." I then looked round for the Chairman, but he was out of the chamber for the moment. Mr. Otterson then said the meeting was not called for Tuesday, and no notices had been sent out. Mr. Millar has done everything he can to give these men an opportunity of being heard to-day, and by taking the course he did in the unfortunate absence of the Chairman, he has hastened on the matter for the purpose of hearing these men. Instead of blaming Mr. Millar I think he should be thanked for having the meeting called. I made the statement that the meeting was called for Tuesday, and Mr. Witty backed me up, but Mr. Hine never stated that no meeting had been called. He is a member of the Committee, and he ought to have known what happened at the last meeting and to have stated so in the House, but he did not say anything about it. Mr. Hine should not have sat in the House and listened to our statements which he evidently knew were not correct without saying so.

*Mr. Witty:* The statement made by Mr. Hine is not correct, but that is not the only time. Any two members of the Committee could have called a meeting if they had desired to do so. I was certainly under the impression that the meeting was called for Tuesday, and so was the Minister under that impression, and any blame that is attached to it I am quite willing to shoulder. It was I who sent the wire, and I consulted with the Minister.

*Mr. Hine:* It was not my concern whether the meeting was called for Tuesday or not, but it is not usual for members of Parliament to send wires away saying that a certain thing would happen which we had decided by mutual consent would not happen. You admit that you sent the wire saying that they would be heard.

*Mr. Witty:* Certainly.

*Mr. Hine:* And we had decided that they would not be heard. I said last night that I could not reveal what had taken place privately before the Committee. That reference was to the fact that it has been informally agreed that they would not be heard.

*Mr. Witty:* There was no decision.

*Mr. Hine:* And now Mr. Millar tells the Committee that he told Mr. Otterson to call the meeting.

*Mr. Brown:* If it had not been for that the Committee would not have been called together.

*Mr. Hine:* Yes, it would have: I should have been quite willing.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* A Minister does not consult with the members of a Committee as to whether a meeting should be called; he goes to the Chairman and asks him. I was informed on Friday last, when I came away from the Local Bills Committee, that the Railways Committee had adjourned till next Tuesday. I heard an attack was being made on the Committee by Mr. Hine, and I replied then that the information given to me was that the Committee was going to meet on the Tuesday, and that in all probability the petition would be heard then. I sat down in my place believing exactly what I had stated. Mr. Otterson then came over to me and said, "You have made a mistake, there has been no meeting called for Tuesday," and I then told him to instruct the clerk to send out notices for Tuesday. If what Mr. Hine said is the case, then I have reason to complain, because if the Committee had decided not to go on with the matter they might at least have let me know.

*The Chairman:* It was not decided.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Well, according to what Mr. Hine says, there was a mutual agreement.

*The Chairman:* At any rate, your Department had informed us that the departmental report was not ready.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* The Department expected to have these two petitions taken this session, and I think as head of the Railway Department and Minister in charge I ought to have been advised.

*The Chairman:* What Mr. Millar has done, there is no doubt has been done in the interests of the Railway men, inasmuch as he wants to give them an opportunity of being heard and placing their grievances before this Committee; but the question arises whether we should commence to investigate those grievances when we cannot do it thoroughly. That is the question for this Committee now to consider.

*Mr. McLaren:* Might I be permitted to say that I have consulted the Railway men outside, and they desire that they may be admitted, and that you might make a statement to them as to the position. They recognize that if the House is closing down at the end of the week it would be futile to attempt to go into all the details, and they simply want to be heard and for the position to be put before them so that they may consider it.

*Mr. Hine:* I agree that it would not do for this Committee to block them, either from the Committee's point of view or the Minister's point of view.

*Mr. Witty:* I think they should be allowed to come in, and I move, "That this Committee is prepared to consider the petition of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants and take evidence."

Motion agreed to, and members of the deputation admitted.

*The Chairman:* Well, gentlemen, regarding this petition from the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, you are quite aware that the end of the session is at no great distance. This Committee would like to give the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants the same consideration that the Railway Officers' Institute got, but, unfortunately, the inquiry into the petition of the Railway Officers' Institute ran into something like four weeks. We have been sitting continuously morning after morning taking evidence on that petition, and we should like to do the same regarding your petition which deals with the Second Division, but you can see that it is impossible to do that with only a week of the session left. However, the Committee is quite prepared to go on with the petition of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants as far as it can. We do not know, of course, what evidence you have to place before us, or how long the Department will take in placing its evidence before us, but we as a Committee are prepared to go as far as we can in the direction of inquiring into the statements made in the petition. If we cannot conclude this session, then, of course, the petition will have to suffer the fate of all petitions that are not concluded at the close of the session—that is, it will have to stand over till the following session. If we can deal with it we will do so. There is just one matter I should like to touch on before you decide what you are going to do, and that is that certain statements have been made in the Press regarding this petition, and I desire to say that none of those statements were ever furnished to the Press with the authority of this Committee. This Committee regulates its own business, and it is not for the Government or the Minister or any one else to decide what the Committee shall do. If this Committee decided not to go on with this petition, then it would not be for the Government to interfere and say that the Committee should go on with it, or *vice versa*. Now, that being the position, I want you to clearly understand that any statements that appeared in the Press concerning what the Committee was likely to do with regard to the petition of the Second Division are entirely without foundation so far as this Committee is concerned.

*Mr. Witty:* According to the paper it was the Government.

*The Chairman:* Quite so; and I want to make it clear that the Government has nothing whatever to do with it, and that it is the Committee which decides what business it will take. It was the opinion of some of the members of this Committee, and it is the opinion of some of them now, that we cannot inquire into the petition as we should like to. This is not the result of any desire to shelve the petition, but the result of a tremendous amount of work having come before this Committee this session. On account of the large amount of work to do, I made the suggestion in the House that the Minister might set up another Committee. I have since discovered that it would be impracticable to carry that idea into effect, because of the fact that the Department could not be represented on two Committees, and the Department must defend itself against all petitions that are presented to the House. There is only one advocate placing the Department's position before the Committee, and that advocate is Mr. McVilly, the Chief Clerk, and he cannot be at two Railways Committees at one time. Consequently, we are in the position of having to deal with your petition at the close of the session. However, we are prepared to do you justice

as far as lies in our power. It is for you to say what you will place before us, and we will do our best.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* I desire to make this explanation: There might be a lurking idea in the minds of the members of the Second Division that the petition of the First Division was drawn ahead to block the Second Division. Well, I wish to explain to the members of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants that the forms of the House are that petitions are taken in the order in which they are presented to the House. The Officers' Institute petition was the first sent to the House, and therefore was the first sent to the Committee and dealt with. If the old petition of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants had remained it would have been gone on with first, but it having been withdrawn and another one presented in its place it had to come after the petition of the First Division.

*Mr. McLaren:* I desire to explain to the Committee that I consulted with the petitioners outside, and they gave me to understand that they desired to be heard this morning. They fully recognize, in view of the probable early closing-down of the House, that it would be very difficult to deal with the whole of the details of the petition, and they desire to know just what the position was. I think if Mr. Veitch, the president of the society, were permitted to make a statement he could put his views of the situation before the Committee. If the Committee thinks it will take three or four weeks, I scarcely think the House will stay three or four weeks longer. It is not a matter for the Committee, but a matter for the House, and that is the difficulty.

*Mr. Veitch:* Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I realize from the facts which have been stated so far as time is concerned that it would be impossible for this Committee to do justice to the petition of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants with the remnant of the session left. With regard to the statement made by the Minister, I may say this, that we do not charge any gentleman with ulterior motives. I may tell you that I disapprove of the man with the mud-rake: we are not here in that spirit at all. We are here to do the best we can for the men who have trusted us, and we will accept any position that you can prove to us is the best in the interests of those men. At the same time, I realize that we are in a difficult position. We have been called here hurriedly, all our men are not here, and we have had very little time to discuss the situation; and I should like to have a statement from you, Mr. Chairman, as to how much time this Committee could devote to the consideration of this petition if we decided to accept your suggestion.

*The Chairman:* Well, the statement has been made that the House will close on Saturday. I think, myself, it is impossible, so you see to a great extent we are guessing as to the time we will have available.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* The Government are going to try and bring the House to a close on Saturday.

*The Chairman:* Well, if the House closes on Saturday we would have only Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings. That is about all the time we would have, unless we got special permission from the House to sit while the House was sitting.

*Mr. Arnold:* And in addition the Committee must deliberate and report on the petition of the Railway Officers' Institute. We have heard all the evidence, but it is not yet printed, and we will require a day or so to consider that.

*Mr. Witty:* And then the evidence in regard to the Amalgamated Society's petition would have to be printed.

*Mr. Veitch:* No official report has been sent to members at all by the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants concerning this matter, and if a wrong impression has been placed on what appeared in the Press we are not responsible for it.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* There was a meeting at Addington.

*Mr. Veitch:* I think even the Minister would be doubtful if that was a correct report of what took place at Addington. However, I should be glad if you would allow us to discuss the matter for a few minutes.

*Mr. Hampton:* Referring to the meeting at Addington, I saw it stated in the Press that the meeting condemned the Minister and this Committee. Well, the meeting did nothing of the sort. The resolution carried was that they heard with alarm of the possibility of their petition not being dealt with this session, and we decided that we would ask Mr. Witty and other members to assist us in bringing it on.

*The Chairman:* Regarding the way that came up from the Press Association in Christchurch, my own personal opinion of it is that some irresponsible Railway man said that the Government changed its mind and the petition was to be heard, and the representative of the Press wired it up to Wellington. That is about the position in a nutshell.

*Mr. Arnold:* And stated it as a fact.

*The Chairman:* Yes, as a fact. That is to a certain extent a reflection on this Committee, because the Government changing its mind does not affect this Committee. I felt convinced all along that the wire was not due to any suggestion from a section or number of Railway men, but due to some irresponsible person making the statement to the Press representative.

[The members of the society then withdrew; and, on returning,]

*Mr. Veitch* said: I have consulted with my friends, and we have come to this conclusion: that, as it has taken over a month to take evidence alone on the petition of the Railway Officers' Institute, we feel certain that it would be impossible for this Committee, if it carries out the same procedure as was carried out before, to deal with our petition in a manner that would do justice to our men in anything less than three weeks, and it is doubtful if it is possible to do it in that time. It is not our fault that there is no time to consider our petition now. I might say that it is fourteen months since we first petitioned Parliament for consideration of the grievances of Railway men. Therefore we cannot accept the responsibility for the fact that there is not now time to complete consideration of this matter. I believe candidly that this Committee is willing and anxious to do justice to the Railway men, but I realize, and I think you all realize, that it



is quite impossible for you to do that in the remnant of the session that is left. Now we have to ask you to provide some other tribunal to consider our petition. We are not prepared to go on with the work in a slipshod, haphazard fashion, because if we do the limited amount of evidence that we would place before you when put into print would appear to be all the evidence, and so our case would be considerably weakened, and our men must suffer in consequence. Therefore we have decided to ask this Committee to set up some other tribunal immediately to investigate our petition.

*Mr. Arnold:* On the lines of a Royal Commission?

*Mr. Veitch:* We leave it to the Committee to decide what lines. We are prepared to accept any Commission, Board, or inquiry that you propose to set up, but we think we should be consulted with regard to the constitution of such a Board or body to whom you would relegate the matter. We want to be consulted as to the constitution of it, and to be given a full opportunity of defending our men before it. If we get that we do not care exactly what form the inquiry takes. It is urgently necessary that the affairs of the Railway Department should be gone into thoroughly in every detail. I do not think there is any Department of the State that involves anything like the amount of detail that is involved in the Railway Department. We would not go into this inquiry in a spirit of hostility towards the management, or Government, or any one else. If we were given a full and free opportunity of explaining what is really the matter with the Railway men we could convince the House, this Committee, and the management that many reforms are very urgently needed, that it would not cost the country much money, and that for all time afterwards the Railway men would be a far more satisfied lot of men. The trouble really is not a matter of wages only. I understand and acknowledge greatly the fact that the Minister of Railways proposes to bring before Parliament shortly a Bill to improve the conditions of the Railway men in the matter of wages in certain directions. We do not know what the proposals are, and, not being fully conversed in parliamentary procedure, I presume it is confidential till the Bill is brought down. However, I acknowledge that fact, but I wish to say that it is not altogether a matter of wages. Of course, the wages question is a very important one, but it is not really the whole cause of the trouble that exists in the Railway Department now. The real essence of the difficulty is the fact that we have no power to enforce what we believe we are entitled to, and that we have no defence. I do not speak disparagingly of the Minister of Railways, but this is the position we are in with regard to him when we have a dispute. I will put it this way: Supposing a man comes to me and says I owe him £5, and I say to him, "I do not owe you anything." That constitutes a dispute between him and me; and could you imagine any position to be weaker than if he had to come to me to arbitrate between us as to whether I owed him that money or not? Well, gentlemen, that is the position between the Minister of Railways and ourselves. If we have a dispute with him we have to ask him to arbitrate between us. That is not fair—we should have some body that we could appeal to when we have trouble. If we had that, then a feeling of security would exist in the Railway service. It is the insecurity that causes the trouble, and when retrenchment comes along the things we thought we were absolutely sure about slip through our fingers. I do not want to go through the whole position now, but I know this is a most important point in connection with the trouble in the Railway Department to-day. The men are very much dissatisfied at the present time, and greatly disappointed because they have not been able to get a full investigation this session. I sincerely hope you will see your way to establish some Board or Commission, or whatever you like to call it, to make the fullest investigation into the whole position. If you will grant us that we will give you our assurance that we will not approach the Board in a spirit of hostility to any one, but rather with the hope and with the firm intention, if possible, of making the Railway Department a far better Department from a parliamentary standpoint, from the public standpoint, and from the standpoint of the employees.

*The Chairman:* Then you have decided not to go on?

*Mr. Veitch:* Yes, we have decided not to go on with the evidence before this Committee. We realize that if we cannot put the whole case that half the case will appear to be the whole case, and people will say that if that is all the Railway men had to complain about it is not much after all. We have to have a full investigation and to be able to state our case fully.

*The Chairman:* Well, Mr. Veitch and gentlemen, I think your decision a very wise one, and a good number of the members of this Committee, if not all of them, agree with pretty well every remark you have made. This Committee, of course, wants to go exhaustively into your petition, as it did in the case of the petition of the Railway Officers' Institute, and there is no doubt about it that the men you represent would be prejudiced in the eyes of those who would read the evidence if that evidence was not complete. Not only that, but this Committee would not be in a position to deliberate fully regarding the conditions of service of the Second Division if it was not in possession of all the evidence you could place before it. I think, myself, your decision is a very wise one. Regarding your request that this Committee should make a recommendation to the House that you should get a Commission or Board set up to inquire into your grievances, of course that will be a matter for the Committee to deliberate on; but I think a number of members are already in agreement with even that suggestion, for it seems that some investigation should be made before the House meets again. You desired that your petition should be considered this session, but as time will not permit it I feel certain that some members of this Committee are convinced that exhaustive investigation should be made into your grievances by a Board or Commission, just as investigation has been made into those of the First Division. However, it will be for the Committee to decide, and I just want to assure you that I, as Chairman of this Committee, consider you have come to a very wise decision indeed.

*Mr. Veitch:* We are very anxious to have this inquiry started immediately if possible. We want to go right into this matter. I may tell you that you might as well try and stop the rising of the tide as to check the indignation of the Railway men at the present time. We have a duty to perform to these men, and we will not fail in our duty to them; but we want to have an immediate investigation into this matter, and I desire to emphasize the word "immediate."

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* I think the members of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants have taken the proper course. The Department does not desire that there should be any half inquiry into the matter at all. We are acting on behalf of the Department, and we desire the public to know what the Railway men's grievances are in every shape and what the Department's reply is, so that the public will have a full opportunity of judging whether our employees are well treated or not. We were willing to go on with the inquiry, and I regret very much that the time at our disposal does not enable us to go into it fully. We court the fullest inquiry into everything, and if there is anything wrong, then it ought to be rectified. So far as the Department is concerned, we do not think the wrongs exist. Of course, so far as absolute satisfaction is concerned, that can never be. The Committee may go into the matter and make representations of a favourable nature, and even then there would not be satisfaction. There is no such thing as satisfaction for many months. There always will be discontent for some time, because what appears to one man to be fair does not appear so to another man. The Department does not fear inquiry, and does not want any injustice to be done, and if there is any injustice existing, the sooner it is remedied and made known the better. Nevertheless, I am not aware of it. There are certain things that the members would like to have got which the Department has not seen its way to give, yet, as Mr. Veitch has said, it is not a question of wages altogether. That is quite true, but there are other things which he must admit means an increase of expenditure, and, taking the whole of those things together, I think Mr. Veitch would be surprised to know what the cost would be; but the sooner it is all brought out the better. I want to see a contented service, and you will never get satisfaction until you have a fairly contented service. I think members of the Committee will admit that the Railway Officers' Institute were given every opportunity to bring everything forward, and I desire the same opportunity to be extended to the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. I do not care whether it is this Committee or any outside body, and as far as I am personally concerned I court the fullest inquiry into the Department.

*Mr. F. Brown:* I fully appreciate what Mr. Veitch has said about having a Board set up to make the fullest inquiry, but to whom would this Committee report?

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* To the Government.

*Mr. McLaren:* As to what Mr. Veitch has said in regard to the matter of the men's grievances having been before Parliament practically for fourteen months, the position is that the petition of last year was in substance very much the same as the petition of this year, and no doubt amongst the rank and file that has created and must accentuate the feeling that exists in regard to the delay. Mr. Veitch has presented a very fair request in making an appeal for immediate action on the part of some other tribunal, and I think the Committee would do well to accept the suggestion made by Mr. Veitch.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* I should like to point out in connection with Mr. McLaren's statement that the petition of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants last year was presented at the very end of the session, and there was no opportunity of dealing with it. We anticipated being able to deal with it this session, but we never anticipated that the hearing of the Railway Officers' Institute petition would have taken four weeks to consider, and it is that which has prevented the petition of the Second Division being gone on with earlier.

*The Chairman:* Yes, I believe the petition was presented very late last session, and, of course, that petition would not come before the Committee again this session. Consequently the presentation of it last session did not give it a prior claim to any other petition presented this session.

*Mr. McLaren:* I did not want to be misrepresented in regard to the matter, but the rank and file would take it that the grievance extended back from the time that the first petition was presented, and that has no doubt accentuated the position.

*The Chairman:* As Chairman of the Committee this year and also last year, I regret exceedingly that both the petitions of the Railway Officers' Institute and the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants could not have been dealt with last session. We sat here for, I think, five months and a half last year, and we had a good deal of time to devote to petitions, but, unfortunately, these petitions were not before us. This session being the last session of the Parliament is necessarily very short, and consequently it would always be better if all such petitions involving an inquiry could be presented early in the middle session of each parliamentary term. I expressed regret on former occasions that these petitions were not before us early last session, when we could have given them an exhaustive inquiry.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* I should like to point out to the members of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants that every petition that comes here in regard to railway matters has to go down to the Department before we can deal with the matter at all, and then in the Head Office they have to go through all the files, make out a case, and send in a report to the Committee before the matter can be dealt with, so that you can understand that with a petition like yours some little time is occupied in the Head Office in getting a report before the Committee.

*Mr. Veitch:* There is no doubt a lot of truth in what has been said, and had we been notified in regard to those matters we would have known how to act; but, as the Minister has stated, if he will approach this new investigation—if it is decided on—in the spirit he has explained to us this morning, then I can only give him our assurance we will also act in the same way. We want to improve the Railway service; we are not taking any narrow view of it at all, and we will help the Minister to improve it if he will only pull with us in this matter, as I am sure he will.

*The Chairman:* Very well, gentlemen, we will consider your representations and report to the House.

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