

class drivers the best men among them will be selected. I examined all the services and I found that there was only one man who was entitled to be ranked in the first class.

76. Are you likely to appoint any to the first class shortly?—Yes; I noticed that there were several on the list who will be entitled to be placed on the first class when they are due for it.

77. You do not think that the Locomotive Superintendent inflicts punishment on the drivers for the purpose of keeping them from getting their increase of pay?—Certainly I do not.

78. Then, you think the drivers are asking, as you state in replying, to be put into their proper classes, whether their conduct is good, bad, or indifferent?—Yes; I may say that I cannot understand what the petitioners mean by saying that they have been subjected to acts of injustice.

79. Do you think the remarks you have made in regard to the drafting of the petition are correct?—Yes, I think so.

80. Do you know whether all documents which are sent to the head of the department through the Locomotive Engineer reach their destination?—I believe they do, and I have no reason to suppose that anything is ever suppressed.

81. Were no letters kept back when the strike was on?—Not as far as I know.

82. Did not the Locomotive Superintendent refuse to send on a paper which referred to the carpenters?—I have no recollection of that. But I am sure that the Locomotive Superintendent would not venture to stop any letter which he was asked to send on to me. If he did that it would be as much as his reputation was worth.

83. There is reason to believe that every document which is sent in to the Locomotive Superintendent for presentation to the head of the department is not forwarded?—The Locomotive Superintendent would not hold back anything.

84. Do the men know that the applications for an increase have to be sent in upon a particular form?—No; the men themselves never send in the applications, but the officers do so for them when they are due for it.

85. Is every man paid for each day's work?—Yes.

86. Are the men allowed anything when they are sick?—They were not until recently; but now deserving cases are taken into consideration.

87. Are the men not entitled to more than one day's leave of absence in the year?—They are not entitled to more than that; but I think, at the same time, that the men should have some relaxation. Of course, there are difficulties attending it; if we gave the drivers leave of absence we should have to give the other day-men the same privilege.

88. The employés in the traffic department have a week's leave each year, have they not?—Yes. The men who get leave of absence do not get paid for overtime, but there is no proper rule in the service regarding that.

89. In the tenth clause of their petition the petitioners say that they only get one day's leave of absence, while the enginemén in another colony get seven days a year. Our men get one day only, and will you give them seven days' holiday per year, allowing the men to choose the time, subject to convenience of the department, and give them notice of same?—I will draw the Minister's attention to your request.

90. Why could not the inquiry they ask for be granted?—I do not think it would be for the good of the department if such an inquiry were held. When a serious complaint is made, the matter is inquired into by two officers of the department, and the persons who complain get all fairplay; but it is not desirable that an official inquiry should be held in every case.

91. Is it not a fact that if you yourself had not held an inquiry an engine-driver would have fared badly?—No, I think not. In the case referred to the Traffic Manager made the charges, and the matter was referred to me as they were not very definite.

92. Sometime ago there was an expression of opinion by the public that the Railway Department was extravagantly administered. Was not the general belief that the extravagance lay with the officials rather than with the working-men of the railway?—I think there were too many people employed in the Railway Department. In fact, I think the whole of the railway was over-manned in all departments.

93. Do you think the men would object to economy, when absolutely necessary, being practised, if every one were treated alike?—Yes, I do think so.

94. Are not some of the Stationmasters provided with a house worth £50 a year?—Yes; but the drivers and firemen, on the average, draw about £30 a year more than the Stationmasters and clerks, after considering house-rent.

95. What do you mean by the paragraph about persons outside the department exercising evil influences over the railway employés?—I will read a letter by a man named Wilson to an employé in the Railway Department, and also another by the same person written to the newspaper sometime after. I wish to indicate how little value can be attached to the remarks of that person, and also to show that others were acting in collusion with him to the detriment of the service:—

No. 1.

190, George Street, Dunedin, 16th October, 1880.

DEAR SIR,—

How are you getting on during this great eruption? Our friend Conyers is rather a small man now. I see, by the *Star* of yesterday, that J. H. Lowe is to be cleared out. Our friend, Alfred Luther B——, was carrying a high head; but since Townie got notice he has drawn in his horns. I hope Mr. A. Smith will come down, as, what little I know of him, he is just the Moses to put this place in ship-shape.

You have no idea how the place is now degraded and demoralized. It was bad when you were here; but then that was paradise to what things are now.

I am glad I am out of it as things are.

Conyers sent, by Mr. Stout, for me to go and see him, and he would reinstate me; but I had enough of him and his deceit, for I would not work again under any agricultural labourer, as I did under O. Stewart.

I am going to rest till new year; then I will clear out of the country, and will, I think, steer for San Francisco.

I can tell you that I have them here frightened to death, as I tell them Mr. Smith is coming. They here think I know; but, of course, it is only my wish that Mr. S. gets charge of the running department of this Island.

Hoping to hear from you soon, and that you are well, is the wish of,

Yours truly,
E. WILSON.