

"There appeared to be an utter disregard of the foremen's presence in any of the shops, the men being allowed to talk, loaf, and do a very indifferent day's work." I think that will follow. The foremen had responsibilities cast upon them of conducting the work under businesslike methods, but they had no power. Their power is robbed to a great extent, partly by the classification and partly by the men being assured of a constant job by the Superannuation Act, and also by the existence of the Railway Appeal Board. I know from hearsay, from foremen and from men, that men have spoken to their superior officers in a manner that would not be tolerated in outside or private employment. I do not want this for one moment to apply to the boiler-shop. I do not think it ever existed there. If a man attempted to speak to Mr. Henderson in such a way as I have heard men have spoken to officers, Mr. Henderson would at once report him, and steps would be taken. I do not think it will be found that the requisitions sent forward to the Department by the administrative heads have been given effect to. I recollect asking a manager why a certain machine had been brought into his shop, and he said he did not know. They did not know that this machine was coming until it was put in. That does not apply to Addington particularly. Machines are brought into shops irrespective of what is recommended by the foreman and perhaps the Manager. They have been put in, and such machines are of no use very often. I have also asked that the shop-managers should be able to engage and dismiss men. That is not a matter for me to deal with; but, to my mind, if the foreman of a shop is responsible for turning out the work in an economical and workmanlike way, he should have power to say what workmen he shall have and what workmen he shall dismiss. With regard to what I have said respecting the Classification Acts passed by Parliament, I know the spirit in which those Acts of Parliament were passed, and I know that they were passed very much in the interests of the men. I know that, when the last Classification Act was passed, one of the clauses which is giving discontent was passed in the spirit that both Mr. Ronayne and myself and the foreman who interviewed Mr. Ronayne at the time agreed to; but I know that the Act is read in quite a different manner to that, and is not read in the spirit in which Parliament passed it.

As regards the cost of work at Addington compared with elsewhere in the Dominion, of course I cannot speak; but, as I said in opening my remarks, I have been met with that charge from the Railway Department when a matter regarding Addington has cropped up. I can only say to my knowledge from hearsay that in the carpenters' shop work is done in Addington in a much better and stronger way than it is in other Railway shops in the Dominion. That, I think, the Commission will find out if they get the men to speak. In the construction of carriages, in putting the ends of the carriage together, panelling—I think it is called—is carried out at Addington, whilst in other shops that is not done, but pieces of wood are nailed on. That goes to increase the cost of the construction at Addington.

My only object in coming forward is to show that I have the interests of the Railway service at heart; but I have the interests of the Dominion still more at heart, and I want to see the work of this Dominion done in a workmanlike and good manner; and, if this Commission goes to work on the lines on which they have started, the result of their labours will be that we shall have work turned out of the Railway shops that will compare favourably with shops anywhere, and the principle of State control in this matter will be recognised as the proper method of turning out State work.

1. *The Chairman.*] Do you consider that the foremen, especially in the boiler-shops, have too much clerical work to do?—I do.

2. You think the clerical work should be reduced, or the foremen be afforded more assistance?—Yes. I say now, in order to put Mr. Henderson right in case he should be tackled with this, that it is not on his words at all I am going. I know what hours he has in the office, and I know that such work would not be put on any foreman in a private shop outside.

3. You are aware that discontent exists amongst the men in the shops, and that this results in the work being turned out in a less economical manner than otherwise would be the case?—Yes; there are other causes, too, of course.

4. You think the work is not carried out as economically as it might be?—That is so.

5. You mention extravagance in putting in new machinery in the shop when really some of the older machines should be replaced?—Yes.

6. Can you give instances?—Yes, I can; but I would much rather the Commission should find out for themselves. I should say that the last occasion on which I had this brought under my notice was at Petone; there is a set of rollers at Petone which must be fifty years old. They are worked by hand, and take two hours and a half to roll a small cylinder. Within the last few weeks a machine was put in at Addington which must have cost £250, and is only worked one day in three weeks.

7. What machine do you allude to at Addington?—I think it is a milling-machine.

8. You mention that the foremen and managers have no power of control over the men—they are unable to engage men or dismiss them?—They have not that power. I have held all along that they should have that power.

9. You mention that the men speak to the officers in a manner which would not be tolerated in outside shops: will you give us an instance?—I prefer not.

10. You also mention that the foremen and managers are not consulted with respect to the new machines which are placed in the shops?—I have been assured by the foremen that that is so.

11. Will you give instances?—I do not think it is wise to give instances. They may be so rare that the Department may be able to trace the source of information. I got it in confidence, and, such being the case, I do not think it is wise to give it away.

12. *Mr. Niven.*] You told us you never used the words "Government stroke"?—Yes.

13. Can you tell us what the words "Government stroke" mean? Is it a quick stroke or a slow stroke?—I assume it was intended to convey the meaning that the men took things fairly easy.

14. The usual meaning is "slow stroke"?—Yes, I should say so.