

5. *The Chairman.*] I suppose, in dealing with the staff, you have some system of being assisted by some body of men?—There is a properly equipped Staff Office at Wellington. There is a special officer in charge of the staff, and he is assisted by the clerks who have had experience in such matters. The office is a properly organized one.

6. It has been stated that requisitions to administrative heads have not been given effect to. We presume that such requisitions are considered and dealt with by the administrative heads on their merits?—All requisitions receive careful consideration. They are dealt with by myself and the Chief Mechanical Engineer. They are not always acceded to, and for the following reasons: (1.) They may be considered unnecessary or extravagant. (2.) The requisition may be desirable, but funds are not available. (3.) In all cases where it is shown that the request is reasonable, and that compliance with same would expedite and reduce the cost of manufacture, the requisitions are complied with, subject, of course, to the necessary funds being available.

7. It has also been stated that the recommendations from the local officers for the discharge of men have not always been acted upon. Do you desire to give the Board any information on that subject?—I think my general observations with regard to the staff have dealt with that to a certain extent. But we do get certain recommendations with regard to men which are not given effect to, and for very good reasons. Take a case in point: A man may have been seriously injured in the service. He is not capable of doing a very hard day's work, but the management consider that under special circumstances it would be doing a cruel thing to discharge that man, and an endeavour is made to find for him suitable light work—that would be one case where a Workshops Manager possibly might say, "Well, by keeping this man on, the cost of work is slightly increased." But we are simply doing what any right-feeling employer would do, and what is done every day in private work. Another case where his recommendations would not be carried out would be where the recommendations were not considered reasonable and not in the interests of the service. In every case in which a request is declined there are always good and sufficient reasons for not acceding.

8. We had some evidence regarding inventions and devices brought forward by workmen to facilitate the carrying-out of their work. Without expressing any opinion on the particular devices which have been brought under our notice, we should like to know, in the case of a deserving workman who has done something to facilitate his work, and which has been adopted by the Department, if there is any system by which his invention or device is brought under notice of the proper authorities, and the workman, if it is thought that he deserves it, rewarded?—Every workman who considers he has a claim on the Department for the invention of a labour-saving appliance is quite within his rights in writing to his foreman drawing his attention to the fact that he has designed or invented this labour-saving appliance, and requesting him to forward the matter to the Locomotive Engineer, who will transmit it to the Chief Mechanical Engineer, who in turn will forward it to me. This officer, after going into the merits of the invention as a labour-saving device, should make a recommendation to me as to whether it is deserving of special recommendation. Quite a number of cases from time to time are dealt with in that manner, and they have received recognition. As a practical man, Mr. Chairman, you will understand that there is a large number of devices submitted to the Department which are by no means original, and, although they have not been in use in the New Zealand Railway Workshops, they have perhaps been in general use in other workshops. In many cases the Chief Mechanical Engineer is aware of the existence of these devices. We might take, for instance, the spark-arresting appliance. We were pestered from one end of the globe to the other. By some means, some years ago, it got into the English papers that the New Zealand Government had offered a reward of £3,000 for the invention of an efficient spark-arrester. Soon after it appeared we were flooded with designs of the most crude and impossible nature. It has toned down a bit now, after we have replied to hundreds and thousands of letters on the subject. Bonuses are granted from time to time to workers and others who introduce mechanical devices which are calculated to cheapen the cost of work. At the present time a workman at the Addington Shops has applied for a bonus—his device has been favourably reported on, and he has been granted a bonus of £10. The device is not original, but it was considered a reasonable thing to recognise the way in which he had adapted the tool for its special work. The matter stands there now, and we are making further inquiries into the matter. But in every case where it is proved to me that a man had introduced something which tends to cheapen the cost of work, I am always prepared to recommend the Minister to grant a special bonus. That is always the attitude I have taken up. But there are men who are paid for this class of work. As an apprentice, many years ago, I worked in the tool-shop, and spent six months there, and it was the work of the man in charge of the tool-shop to devise tools for doing special work, and he got no recognition for so doing—it was considered part of his duty. In like manner the Chief Draughtsman or the Chief Mechanical Engineer, in designing a locomotive, hits upon some happy idea which may make it more perfect; but he gets no special recognition for that. It is part of his duty. That is what he is paid for. Unless it is something very exceptional, there is no special recognition given to the First Division. It has been the invariable rule to recognise any special device which may be introduced by men in the Second Division. Possibly many of the devices which I hear about from time to time have never been reported to myself, and I may be ignorant of their existence, but in all cases where it is clearly shown that a device is of value, I am prepared, and always have been, to see that special recognition is given to the man.

9. *Mr. Hampton.*] You spoke of casuals being placed on the permanent staff from time to time. I should like to ask you, in the event of that being done, does the continuous casual time of that man count for superannuation purposes?—As a rule it does. I think I am correct in saying that.

10. In the event of one of these casuals being dismissed, say, by the hasty action of a local officer, he would stand to lose considerably in his old age?—The local officer has no power to dismiss.