

To a speech of Mr. Wilford (*Hansard* of 4th of August, 1916, page 791)—

Now, I have had it stated to me by a man who was himself concerned with that rolling-stock that he declined to carry the burden of responsibility on his shoulders, and that he made his representation to me for that reason, and asked me to pass it along. I went to the Minister of Railways and told him privately that I had been informed of the condition of some of the railway rolling-stock of this country, and, as I did not intend to take the responsibility, I asked him to have proper inquiry made by some one outside the Railway service in order to see who should bear the burden of responsibility, if responsibility there was. The Minister has had inquiries made and has carried out his promise thoroughly, but these inquiries do not satisfy me, because they are from a prejudiced source. Let us, for example, take it that some other Department had to deal with a question as to the inefficacy of its methods of carrying on its departmental work, would the Minister in charge of the Department expect to satisfy the country and the House if he were to ask the men who were claimed to be wanting in their attention to their duties to report on themselves as to the amount of attention they paid to their duties? Obviously, such a position would be absurd. If the Commissioner of Police had complaints made to him by outside people that his sergeants did not do their duty, would the Commissioner of Police be satisfied with reports from the sergeants concerned? And if the sergeants wrote back to the Commissioner and said they had done their duty, would that be an end of the matter as far as that Department was concerned? In my opinion, that is not the way to settle the matter. I hope it can be found that there are no grounds for one's fears, but one of the gentlemen who made representations to me on the point has been known to me for twenty-seven years. He has held good positions in this country, though in the Railway Department, and, as he said to me, "Mr. Wilford, even if I have to go before a Committee of Parliament and give my evidence I am prepared to do so. You can call on me if you want to, and if you get an answer from the Minister stating that no such thing exists I will come to your aid, because I have only a few more years to go as far as my superannuation is concerned, and I am prepared to take any risk there is." He told me seriously and quietly that he would be ready to come forward and prove his statement. That is why I brought the matter up.

EVIDENCE.

Mr. W. A. Veitch, M.P.

Mr. Veitch appeared at the invitation of the Commission. In his statement he claimed that the remarks in connection with rolling-stock made by him in Parliament were not assertions, but partook of the nature of questions. The Commission is unable to agree with this view.

Mr. Veitch stated to the Commission that he had been impressed with the appearance of carriages and wagons, and was of opinion that the painting had not been kept up as it should have been, or as was formerly done; that he noticed side-play in axle-boxes and brakes, and that axle-boxes had been lined up. He did not approve of the latter practice. He considered that there was evidence of extreme economy in the matter of maintenance of railway stock.

He objected to the use of pieced draw-bar springs, and considered that pieced springs were more likely to break than whole springs, and that pieced springs were also less elastic. He took exception to the use of pieced springs even in a train of wagons, regarding them as much less efficient than whole springs, but admitted that if his speech in the House suggested that a pieced spring became one solid block this was not what he intended to convey.

He admitted that he was in error in making a statement in the House that instructions had been issued to put pieced springs in *all* vehicles.

He considered that he had seen sufficient to justify a careful investigation by some impartial and responsible individual.

After a demonstration by the Chairman of the functions of a continuous draw-bar, Mr. Veitch agreed that he was under a misapprehension when he made a statement to the House that it was possible that broken draw-bar springs might result in an addition of 600 in. to the length of a train.

He considered a practical inspection of the rolling-stock by the Commission would be of far greater value for ascertaining its true condition than the hearing of evidence and representations of counsel.

Mr. Veitch stated that there were no witnesses whom he desired to be called before the Commission.