

We concur with this recommendation so far as it goes, but are of opinion that in addition to the foregoing these men are entitled to an increase in wages of 62 per cent., as shown by the Government Statistician's figures, or 7s. 3d. per week, over the basic rate in the Railway service in 1914.

MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT.—A majority of the Board recommends as follows :—

“That line and relaying gangs work forty-eight hours per week at the present rates of wages. Overtime at rate-and-a-half rates to be paid for all time worked in excess of eight hours on any day except where, in accordance with the present practice, longer hours are worked during the earlier part of the week in order to finish the week's work sooner. Members of line gangs to commence and cease work at the appointed time, and to be paid for travelling-time at the ordinary schedule rate for the distances for which they now receive a time allowance, and to be given one day off per month.”

We also concur in this recommendation so far as it goes, but we can see no reason why these men should not be allowed to decide by ballot in exactly the same way as recommended for the workshops men as to whether they desire to return to the forty-four-hour week or otherwise.

In this case also we are of the opinion that these men are entitled to an increase of 62 per cent. as shown by the Government Statistician's figures, or 7s. 3d. per week, over the basic rate in the Railway service in 1914.

TRAFFIC DEPARTMENT.—A majority of the Board recommends as follows :—

“(a.) Traffic staff—excluding employees covered by paragraphs (b) and (c)—and Stores staff to work forty-eight hours per week with overtime rates for all time worked in excess of forty-eight hours in any week or ten hours on any day. Overtime to be paid for at rate and a half, and any time paid for as overtime over the day not to be taken into account in computing overtime over the week. No night rates to be payable.

“(b.) Tablet-porters to work forty-eight and fifty-six hours as at present, with overtime payment at rate and a half for all time worked in excess of these hours. No night rates to be payable.

“(c.) Crossing-keepers, bridge-keepers, night-watchmen, female waiting-room attendants, and messengers to work same hours as at present, with overtime payment at rate and a half for all time worked in excess of these hours. No night rates to be payable.”

In this case we have to enter the strongest possible protest against the decision of a majority of the Board. These men, in common with other employees in the Railway service, had their hours extended from forty-four to forty-eight per week with the addition of four hours' pay at the flat rate. In addition to this the overtime rate after eight hours between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. was withdrawn. A majority of the Board has now recommended that the night rate at present existing shall be withdrawn, and overtime at the rate of rate and a half on the schedule rate paid after ten hours' work. This strikes at the very root and principle of the eight-hour day. It may be urged that in a transport industry an eight-hour day is impracticable. We agree that to some extent this is true: that is to say, it is impossible to fix the duties in every case at exactly eight hours per day; but, on the other hand, the Department has the right to work a member as few or as many hours as it thinks fit on any one day, and as the exigencies of the service may require, and we are of the opinion that under these circumstances any time in excess of eight hours between the hours of 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. should be paid for at overtime rates. This is now the practice in the Locomotive Running Branch, was the practice in the Traffic Running Branch before the dispute, and we can see no reasonable grounds for any alteration or any differential treatment of men doing the same work in the same service.

As regards the night rate of rate and a quarter between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., we are of the opinion that this should remain as at present and be based upon the schedule hourly rate of pay.

In so far as the hours are concerned, we consider that these men should be given the right, by ballot, under the same conditions as recommended for the workshops, to decide as to whether they desire to return to the forty-four-hour week or not.

We are also of the opinion that these men are entitled to a 62-per-cent. increase in wages, or 7s. 3d. per week, over the basic rate in the Railway service in 1914.

Prior to the strike the man on the basic wage (£3 19s. 10d. per week, less superannuation) was finding it particularly difficult to obtain a fair standard of living, and if the recommendations of a majority of the Board are given effect to it will be imposing a further burden upon these men which they are quite unable to bear. We maintain that every worker, whatever his station in life, should receive in wages enough to enable him to lead a full human life, to marry and bring up a family, and keep them and himself in comfort. To pay him less than this is clearly an injustice. He is burdened by the law with the responsibility of maintaining his wife and family, and he may be punished with fine or imprisonment unless he discharges this responsibility; but before the State demands the discharge of these duties it should secure to those in its employ the means of performing them.

Summarized, we recommend a return to the conditions existing prior to the strike, with the exception that the penal rate of one-quarter be paid on the schedule hourly rate, plus an increase in wages of 7s. 3d. per week as set out above.

SOCIETY'S CLAIM NO. 3: *That all way and works men be paid travelling-time going to and returning from their work at week-ends.*

A majority of the Board recommends “that the following proviso be added to clause 21 of the recommendations dated the 23rd June, 1920, of a former Board of Inquiry: ‘Provided also that, subject to the above restrictions, such employees shall, wherever possible, be allowed to leave the work on Friday evenings, if the week's work has been completed, in order to visit their homes for the week-end.’”