REPORT IV.

SIR,— Wellington, 23rd August, 1924.

In pursuance of the notice of appointment and order of reference dated the 13th day of June, 1924, whereby His Honour Mr. Justice Frazer, Messrs. W. Scott, H. Hunter, M. J. Mack, and myself were appointed and authorized to inquire into and report to you whether in our opinion any, and, if so, what, alterations should be made in the rates of pay and/or the conditions of work in operation in respect of members of the Second Division of the staff of the Government Railways Department (other than employees of the Locomotive Running Branch), having due regard to the public interests and the maintenance of the Government Railways as a business concern paying a reasonable interest on the capital cost thereof, I have the honour to report as follows :—

HOURS AND OVERTIME (*Claim No. 1, A.S.R.S., in so far as it relates to workshops and works staffs*).

His Honour Mr. Justice Frazer and Mr. Scott are of the opinion that a forty-eight hours week is necessary to ensure efficiency in the branches of the Railway service coming within the scope of the Board's inquiry, with the possible exception of the workshops and works staffs. I see no reason why an exception should be made in regard to the workshops and works staffs, and have therefore dissented from the recommendation of the other members of the Board that a secret ballot should be taken of the members of those staffs on the question of whether they desire to work a forty-four- or forty-eight-hours week. The forty-four-hours week was not satisfactory, and the experience in New Zealand in this regard was not singular, as exemplified in the case of the New South Wales Railways, where it was abolished.

If it had been shown that the working of a forty-eight-hours week by the workshops and works staffs of the New Zealand Government Railways was detrimental to their health, or that it deprived them of a reasonable standard of comfort, I would not have supported a forty-eight-hours week; but there is no evidence in that direction, and in view of that fact I am of the opinion that there is no legitimate reason why an exception should be made in favour of the staffs in question.

In this connection I desire to cite an instance where the Full Bench of the Federal Arbitration Court (Australian Commonwealth) dealt with an application made by the timber and iron trades for a reduction of hours from forty-eight to forty-four per week. Very full judgments were given—one by each member of the Court—but it will suffice if I quote an extract from the judgment of Mr. Justice Powers.

Mr. Justice Powers said (*inter alia*), "The claim for reduction of standard hours was not supported by any proof that the workers of Australia were not capable of working forty-eight hours without injury to health or without the forfeiture of a reasonable standard of comfort."

Another Judge, Mr. Webb, Deputy President of the Arbitration Court, mentioned as one of his reasons for ordering a return to a forty-eight-hours week that the working-hours generally observed in other countries were forty-eight.

CLAIM 61 (A.S.R.S.).

I have dissented from the recommendation of the other members of the Board in regard to this claim, being of the opinion that section 9 of the Government Railways Amendment Act, 1921, amply provides the necessary machinery.

I have, &c.,
JAS. MASON.

The Hon. the Minister of Railways, Wellington.

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