

attending his calling, has seventeen days' leave fixed for the year. He is paid a yearly salary, and has nothing paid for overtime. As a rule, his private house is at the station, and he has to live there. Another group comprises the guards, signal-men, and porters. They have continuous labour at port and goods stations, and there they follow the eight-hours system; but in country and some town stations the duties are very intermittent, and in such cases there is no fixed time for work. This group of men have ten days' leave granted. Their duties are not so long and onerous as those of the stationmasters. Then there is the running department, in which we have cleaners (who are practically eight-hours men), and drivers, and firemen, who are intermittent workers. Now, the drivers and firemen, whose work is intermittent, have their working time fixed at ten hours a day, and the wages are fixed on that basis. Comparing these with the tradesmen or mechanics, who get from 8s. to 10s. a day for eight hours' continuous work, they are not treated badly with from 10s. to 12s. a day of intermittent labour. The scale of pay is older than ten years; I suppose it is about fifteen years since it was first started, but it has been modified from time to time, and has been standing as it is now for about ten years. When the scale was elaborated all these points received consideration, and the pay of the men was fixed according to circumstances. The stations were classified, for instance, taking into consideration the hours a stationmaster had to work, the number of trains he had, and the amount of accounting work, and so on; also the number of hands he had to look after. All these points had to be considered in fixing the classification and the rate of pay. I mention these things to show that a great deal of thought and care has been bestowed in fixing the existing scale and the existing regulations, so that men may be paid and their time fixed and leave granted according to the circumstances under which they are working, and the time they have to work, eight hours' continuous work being the basis, and those employes who could not get eight hours' continuous work having their time fixed on something like an equivalent basis.

*Mr. Owen:* With due deference to what Mr. Maxwell has said, I may say that since I have been in the service it has receded greatly in regard to pay: the senior driver had 15s. a day, the next 14s., and the junior 13s. 6d.

*Mr. Maxwell:* Will you tell me where you came from?

*Mr. Owen:* From Canterbury. I refer to the time of the Provincial Government.

*Mr. Maxwell:* You have been in the colony longer than I. Do you maintain that those rates were general?

*Mr. Owen:* I do not wish to maintain anything; I wish to state facts. We want to show, as reasonable men, that these are not extreme cases. In 1871 that was the pay—in 1870 and 1871—not for a single year or two. Mr. Maxwell will admit that 13s. has been paid for drivers; in fact, I may say I received it myself, but, of course, it was cut down by the 10-per-cent. reduction.

*Mr. Maxwell:* The provinces were abolished in 1876. It was the rate of pay up to December, 1876; 14s. was the rate till then, when it was lowered.

*Mr. Owen:* Yes; since the fifteen years back referred to by Mr. Maxwell drivers were receiving 13s. a day, and firemen 10s. That was cut down by the 10-per-cent. reduction in 1879, and has never been restored.

*Mr. McKerrow:* Practically, the present rate dates from 1879?

*Mr. Owen:* Another point I wish to draw attention to is that, while other departments received the 10 per cent. back again, the railway service never did.

*Mr. Hoban:* To go back to the eight-hours system: you, Sir, said it was practicable?

*Mr. McKerrow:* Yes, at a cost.

*Mr. Hoban:* We want that at a cost. Mr. Maxwell has said the rate of pay recognises the principle of eight hours' labour. We say, give us the hours and state your rate afterwards. I believe the men would work at the present rate of pay, but not at the hours. Concede the eight hours and we can go and request the men to be contented. With regard to continuous time, I cannot do better than quote Mr. Elvines' remarks, on page 22 of the report of the proceedings. He says, "Take the works men. Their time is taken up from the time when they start in the morning, and have to cart their tools to the station, go away to the train, put their tools in, get them down again at night and put them away. That is really all work, and we have no compensation whatever. The rule is that you will get a shilling if you are over twelve hours, but the trains are so nicely timed that it is exactly eleven hours fifty-five minutes when you get back, so that we lose that shilling, and have done for years. What we really wish is to be brought under the eight hours' system, and to consider that work the same as that of any other class of men that has been spoken of. With regard to platelayers, many of them have to go seven to eleven miles to work. I have seen them at seven o'clock in the morning. They have to load their trolley, get their tools on, and start at seven to push the trolley to the work; and they have to be there to start at eight. We contend that all that is work for an hour before 8 o'clock. It is a well-known fact that the men are discontented throughout the length and breadth of the colony. Wherever I go I find it is so; and I receive letters to the same effect. You should consider the time these men are going to their work, for it is hard work going up a heavy grade with a trolley in the face of a stiff nor'-wester. I have known men have to pull up at a station and wait for the train." Then there are the porters.

*Mr. McKerrow:* Porters are not employed except at large stations.

*Mr. Hoban:* But where they are employed they are kept on duty for long hours.

*Mr. McKerrow:* But not exercising their muscular energies all the time.

*Mr. Hoban:* I take you to be reasonable. This is the great fault of the traffic department, that, no matter how many hours the men work, they get no overtime for it. We want a man's time to be reckoned while he is on duty. Private firms do it.

*Mr. Maxwell:* Where there is continuous labour of eight hours we recognise that as a day's work, as in a goods-shed, where continuous work is carried on,