

*Mr. Owen:* I hope you do not put us on the footing of tramway-men.

*Mr. Maxwell:* The work is harder on a tramway.

*Mr. Owen:* I do not see that you have given much concession in standing time.

*Mr. Maxwell:* You laid so much stress on it. We thought we were making a great concession.

*Mr. Owen:* I do not think there is a railway in the world where they have such a thing as standing time.

*Mr. McKerrow:* But they are paid by the running.

*Mr. Owen:* Yes; By the trip system. In America they are getting, in some instances, treble what we are getting.

*Mr. Maxwell:* They are paid by the mile in America, and they get very low pay in some instances.

*Mr. Owen:* We do not run so hard as they do generally, and it takes us longer to get to a place. On the other side, I think they have nine hours a day.

*Mr. Rotherham:* They have fifty-five hours a week.

*Mr. Hannay:* Do you think it would be reasonable to make no distinction between a man doing important work and one doing ordinary work.

*Mr. Owen:* I do not want to answer that question. You have laid down sixty hours a week. Even supposing they have fifty-five hours a week on the other side, they are not satisfied with that. They are asking for eight hours per day, each day to stand by itself on its own bottom; and, further than that, that the traffic time should be so arranged that they shall not be asked to remain on duty more than eight hours. Compare that with the question here. I think if you are impartial you will look at one request and then at the other. You see in the one case the men are getting five hours less and are not satisfied, but are going for considerably higher things than we are. I do not know whether they will obtain their wishes; that is a matter for the future to decide. I simply draw attention to what they are asking for there. You want us to accept sixty hours a week, and they are dissatisfied with fifty-five. I think they ask that each ending day shall not exceed eight hours. We have endeavoured, instead of asking for eight hours a day, to get forty-eight hours a week. We thought that would simplify matters greatly. We do not want to make the time and a quarter rate. If you would reconsider the matter—think it over—come! To tell you the truth I am ashamed to go back. I feel I would rather take the boat and go to a fresh sphere, because of this sixty hours a week. I think I have said all I can.

*Mr. McKerrow:* Bear in mind that is the maximum.

*Mr. Owen:* I think I am quoting Mr. Maxwell's words, "Exceptions become the rule."

*Mr. Winter:* I would like to point out to you that this concession has not been asked for on the influence of the moment, but after due consideration and deliberation. The movement is not singular as far as New Zealand is concerned, but everywhere. I mentioned, I think, before that it is in the march of civilisation—that the turning point has arrived. From long hours we must come down to comparatively short hours. It has come to this now: There is a natural law of progress which says that ten hours a day are too long; and I believe that everywhere the whole of the labouring classes have come to the conclusion that eight hours must be the limit. Your servants have had the matter under consideration for some time, and now ask you to keep pace with the times, and reduce the hours of labour to forty-eight. If we go back and inform them that you insist on sixty hours you will see the unfavourable effect it will have. If they find that all hope is thrown away—that they ask for bread and receive a stone—it will cause so much feeling of dissatisfaction among the men that there is no knowing what will be done. You know an avalanche begins from very little, but gradually grows and gathers strength, and finally falls with a crash. The labour question may assume the proportions of that avalanche. I would ask you to consider whether it would not be better to concede these reasonable demands than to risk this avalanche business. I have watched the men, and I feel that they are determined. I think with Mr. Hoban that, as the difference between us does not really amount to a great deal, it would be very wise if you were to concede the lot.

At 1.12 p.m. the discussion was adjourned for lunch. It was resumed at 3 o'clock.

*Mr. McKerrow:* The question of eight hours, I think, we have fought pretty well out. I have made known to you the opinion of the Commissioners, and you—Mr. Hoban and Mr. Winter—said, and it was generally understood, that you would have to see the Executive before anything could be done in the matter. You are not prepared to meet the Commissioners on that point.

*Mr. Hoban:* Our instructions are these: That we, at all hazards, get the eight hours, or forty-eight hours a week. We have submitted the matter to you, and you refuse. We must now return to Christchurch, when you will probably be asked to submit it to arbitration. If you refuse arbitration, then we must resort to extreme measures. That is a thing to be deplored, and I myself have never counselled it. Some people have said that I and one or two others have desired to put ourselves most prominently before the public, but that has never been my object. If I can assist these men I will. I think the matter is one the Commissioners should well consider. We are supported by large bodies of men throughout the colonies, and if extreme measures are resorted to in our case it may cost the colony not £20,000 nor £30,000, but £100,000.

*Mr. McKerrow:* You mean calling the men out.

*Mr. Hoban:* Yes. The men are so determined. They say this principle of eight hours is an almost universal system. It will be all over the world, and why should not the Commissioners in a graceful way give the same terms. You admit the hours are reasonable. The only point in the discussion is whether we shall have the time or not. It is only six hours per week each man, and for this simple concession you force us to take an extreme step. It is hardly worth our while staying, because, if we do not get this, the matter is not worth any more consideration. I regret to have to speak so plainly, but I do not see how we can treat with you at all, unless this is settled. We have thought this matter out in the Executive, and have their opinion; and we have the advice