

doing otherwise. In cases where men having grievances, who have found every other means had failed, would you be prepared to accept any communication from our society—would you recognise the status of the Executive as the medium on the men's behalf?

Mr. McKerrow: As a sort of Appeal Court, you mean?

Mr. Edwards: Yes.

Mr. McKerrow: I have already stated that if men exhausted the means already available, and have not got satisfaction from the Commissioners, it is really their matter as to whether they will proceed further or not. If they think that the Executive of your society can assist them in any way, of course it is quite legitimate to avail themselves of that means of redress.

Mr. Winter: And you are fully prepared to recognise any statement that may come from the Executive?

Mr. McKerrow: Yes.

Mr. Hoban: I am very glad that little matter is settled. Perhaps I was not explicit enough in it.

Mr. McKerrow: I think Mr. Owen put it very nicely.

Mr. Hoban: Well, gentlemen, pursuant to your request, our Executive have conferred, and have sent up delegates to meet you. You have our programme before you. We thought it necessary to draw up something for your guidance, and we are here to give any information and answer any questions you may put. We trust that our meeting here this morning will settle everything to the satisfaction of the Commissioners and the employés.

Mr. McKerrow: You have copies of your letter of the 29th March?

Mr. Hoban: Yes.

1. BOY-LABOUR.

Mr. McKerrow: The first subject you draw attention to is that of boy-labour. That includes of course, apprentices and all labour of boys?

Mr. Hoban: Yes; all under the same heading.

Mr. McKerrow: I would like to ask this question: What is your objection to the employment, or what you call the excessive employment, of boys and youths under twenty-one years of age? What do you fear from it?

Mr. Hoban: What we fear is this: That by-and-by there will be all boys in the railway-service, and adults will be thrown out on charity. You must recognise that since you took office numbers of lads have been placed on the railway, and at very low pay indeed. Lads of about nineteen years get 3s. or 4s. a day. We must admit that some of them are able to do a man's work, but they will never get to the proper wage, because they are started at 3s.

Mr. Hannay: A lad of nineteen gets 4s. 6d. a day.

Mr. Hoban: Well, boys are started at 3s. 6d., and these young fellows of nineteen, who have been three or four years in the service, are placed on the casual staff. I understand from the men themselves (I am not a railway-man myself) that no one will be placed on the permanent staff henceforth unless he enters under the age of nineteen. There are any number of men, casual hands, now on the railway who have been there for years, and have no show whatever of getting on to the permanent staff. Of course, matters of this kind I leave to my colleagues, as practical men. I am here simply as President of the society, and they will supply any deficiency.

Mr. Winter: We have the rate of pay here for boys. Boys of sixteen receive 3s. per day. Now, that is not the fact; it might be the intention, but it is not carried into practice. We have boys working at 10s. a week.

Mr. Maxwell: Apprentices, perhaps, taken on before this regulation of the Commissioners?

Mr. Winter: No, taken on since it came into force. If they had been taken on before this regulation their wages ought to have been raised by this time to a higher figure, so it amounts to the same thing, because the age increases the salary. According to the scale laid down here, in the second year they ought to get 3s. 6d. a day, but they do not. Unfortunately, the scale is not adhered to, and in Addington there are boys working for 10s. a week.

Mr. Maxwell: Mechanical apprentices?

Mr. Winter: No; rivet boys, for instance; boys working in the carriage-shop.

Mr. McKerrow: Of what age?

Mr. Winter: Nineteen: one I know of, who gets 10s. a week, unless he has been increased recently. I know there was some talk of increasing his wages. I can quote his name—Blazey.

Mr. McKerrow: But the work could possibly be done by a boy of sixteen years.

Mr. Winter: He has been doing a man's work at the drilling machine; but he has been doing the ordinary boys' work in the carpenters' shop. He has been in the service two years.

Mr. McKerrow: Is it characteristic of the whole arrangement?

Mr. Winter: I would not say it is, but it is a case in point.

Mr. McKerrow: Because this statement is what regulates the employment of youths. There may be some single case in which the circumstances do not apply.

Mr. Winter: Of course, it would take too long to bring up all the instances; I simply quote this as one of my own personal knowledge, by working alongside the lad.

Mr. Maxwell: Is it an exceptional case?

Mr. Winter: I do not think it is. I know that the whole tendency has been to give them as little wages as possible, and refrain from giving them the rises which are due to them according to this statement here. As far as possible, this has been evaded.

Mr. McKerrow: Is that so, Mr. Rotheram?

Mr. Rotheram: No; absolutely untrue. Blazey was eighteen years of age last May, and has received 15s. per week since April, 1889.

Mr. Winter: Well, we have the facts.