

*Mr. Owen* : No ; we only ask eight hours a day. You will equalise the thing in that way. Take the Oamaru run, which I quote as familiar to me. There are dozens of others where the same principle of a long run and short hours comes in.

*Mr. McKerrow* : That is a six hours' run from Christchurch to Oamaru.

*Mr. Owen* : That is the running time, but it does not include getting the engine ready and putting it away. Of course, that is all time occupied.

*Mr. McKerrow* : Of course.

*Mr. Owen* : Then, according to the Victorian or New South Wales' principle, you would be the gainer, would you not ?

*Mr. McKerrow* : Yes.

*Mr. Owen* : Take the other man, who only does the thirty, and curtail his hours.

*Mr. McKerrow* : I am very glad you mention the words "curtail the hours." That is quite impracticable. He runs down from a country station to the port or main line, and stays there, simply because the traffic will not admit of more trains than one down and one up. Therefore he waits all the day, and takes his engine home at night.

*Mr. Owen* : I can see you are quoting extreme cases.

*Mr. McKerrow* : Say what you like, Mr. Owen ; the more candid you are the better for me.

*Mr. Owen* : Well, the expense of running that engine back would not be very much, and it might induce traffic.

*Mr. McKerrow* : Not in the case I am thinking of.

*Mr. Owen* : Well, I am not in a position to judge ; I am only a working-man.

*Mr. McKerrow* : But you are a very intelligent one, though. It is just as you say, the railways run into the country to develop settlement in it. There is a certain amount of stuff to go through on a line, and I think you will admit a train would not increase it.

*Mr. Owen* : In some cases the trains are rushed (though I do not wish to criticize the management in any way). The traffic in some cases is so light that, as you say, it does not pay to run the engine back. Might not that engine run three days a week, start later, and catch the second train ?

*Mr. McKerrow* : Then you infringe upon the public convenience, and the Commissioners know by experience what the result of that is. If you diminish the convenience of any country district in the least there is a great clamour and complaint. In fact we have only just had to rectify a case of that sort. The thing that the Commissioners have really to consider primarily is the convenience of the public, and we must all subordinate our wishes and feelings to that.

*Mr. Owen* : Certainly. The other remedy is that you should have a third man to relieve the driver and the fireman each two days in the week ; of course it would not work in all cases.

*Mr. McKerrow* : That is done in some cases ; it is what is called a three-legged service.

*Mr. Owen* : I am only quoting what is done in some cases, and in many it would cover the difficulty, in other cases it would not ; but I think if the expense were taken all through it would not be very much out of the way.

*Mr. McKerrow* : It would be very great. Although I have not gone into the thing minutely, I find that to carry out what is stated here in your letter would mean an extra cost probably approaching £25,000 a year on engine-drivers and firemen alone. If eight hours was adopted generally for intermittent services it would mean about £50,000 a year. That is a very serious affair, and we have to bear in mind that this £50,000 is to be paid by the people in the way of taxation. The railways are not paying the interest that has to be remitted Home ; so that, whatever we may think about it, it is for Parliament to consider the matter. Parliament votes the money, and we have to make the best disposition we can of it. Parliament looks very closely over the estimates, and for the last few years it has been trying—and very properly, no doubt, looking at the circumstances of the country—to reduce them ; and it will be a very serious thing if we have to propose such a great increase as I have named.

*Mr. Owen* : I cannot say I am in a position to make any statement about calculations, but I think you are on the safe side, sir—a long way on the safe side.

*Mr. McKerrow* : What would be your estimate ? I may help you by saying there are about 260 engine-drivers and firemen.

*Mr. Owen* : In many instances their time does not exceed it, or they would be worked not to exceed it, and no extra hands would be wanted at all. I do not know how the estimate has been got out, and I do not wish to question it in any shape or form, but no doubt it has been taken exactly as it is standing now.

*Mr. McKerrow* : I worked out one case myself. A man is on fifteen hours a day, and "stands" a great deal of that time ; but he was paid 14s. 9d. a day for the month of March last. Applying this [the society's letter of the 29th March], his pay would have been 24s. 9d. per day.

*Mr. Owen* : But we do not ask you to apply that and pay overtime. We thought the thing out, and I assure you it has cost a great deal of trouble to get it out, but we have satisfied the men all through the length and breadth of New Zealand, and what we want now is forty-eight hours a week. You can run a man sixteen hours a day, if you like ; but we ask for forty-eight hours a week, and eight hours off duty.

*Mr. McKerrow* : Take your own illustration of what I have stated. It would simply mean that, if we adhered to the eight hours and no extra pay, we should have two sets of firemen and drivers. One would do the first three days of the week and the other the next three days.

*Mr. Owen* : But if you paid the man for the hours he is on duty, how much more would that add to it ?

*Mr. McKerrow* : It would just double it.

*Mr. Owen* : But if you pay the man time and quarter for his eight hours ?

*Mr. McKerrow* : The man actually averaged nine hours forty minutes' what is termed "work" per day, but he was allowed about two hours forty minutes extra, overtime, and was paid time and a quar-