

*Mr. McKerrow*: I have given some little attention to the subject, and nothing is being said to you, I assure you, in the nature of a "catch" at all. This is really the difficulty we are confronted with. If this eight hours is to be enforced, you lay down that each man in the service is only to work eight hours a day; and you do not want overtime, but to increase the number of employés. It will double them all over the country stations.

*Mr. Maxwell*: It is the time on duty that is to be paid for.

*Mr. McKerrow*: If a train leaves at 9 a.m., and comes in at 9 o'clock at night, the stationmaster has to be there before and after, so that he may actually be on duty, say, fourteen or sixteen hours; so that to carry your suggestion out in its integrity we should require to have two porters and two stationmasters.

*Mr. Winter*: I have said these are exceptional cases, and I am firmly convinced we should be prepared to treat them as such.

*Mr. McKerrow*: But it is one of the features of the service; it is not exceptional at all. You just take my suggestion and look over the time-table to-night. You will see there are a great number of stations in that position.

*Mr. Winter*: And these people have nothing to do in between times?

*Mr. McKerrow*: Well, there are many hours they have very little to do.

*Mr. Winter*: But I say the country can better afford to pay for one or two hours a day where very little is done than to pay for a system which keeps men at work all hours.

*Mr. Maxwell*: In other words, you will have two men on.

*Mr. Winter*: We will leave it to you, and, without any flattery, I may say you are quite capable of doing it.

*Mr. Owen*: Say there is a cadet porter, not a stationmaster. Will that meet it?

*Mr. Maxwell*: No. Take that as an ideal station. They are all occupied when the train comes in. You mean to say the stationmaster can take the morning train, say, and leave the evening train to the cadet.

*Mr. Owen*: Yes; it is done in some cases.

*Mr. Maxwell* thought the stationmaster must be there, being the responsible officer in charge.

*Mr. Edwards*: It has been stated that continuous work, such as in the shops, is paid for at eight hours per day, but it has not been so in some departments. For instance, the platelayers walk miles they are not paid for. The stationmaster, as you must admit, is put at a station because there is sufficient work to keep one occupied. He may have a few hours during the day, but he has certain work to perform in between—accounts to keep, and various duties to perform. Many of them have to clean out their latrines. I know it is done. Then, as the work increases, and a post or telegraph or telephone office is established, the stationmaster will perhaps only have two trains a day, but he has these other departments, which keep him almost continuously employed. He is likely to be called on for letters or telegraph messages any time between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. He has to come down late at night, and make-up his work for the day; and as the work increases a porter is put on, who could share the work with the stationmaster; but at many of these stations the stationmaster is not called "officer in charge," but "porter in charge." At a majority of the small stations a porter is in charge.

*Mr. Maxwell*: No, not a great many; very few. We have been doing away with them gradually. It was originally so, but by degrees we are wiping them out.

*Mr. Edwards*: I know at the time I was in the service the majority of them were called "porters in charge." Many of them, no doubt, were competent enough to do it: and where there is a porter and a stationmaster at a station the work could be divided between them.

*Mr. McKerrow*: In what way?

*Mr. Edwards*: The porter could do the work of one portion of the day, and the stationmaster the other.

*Mr. McKerrow*: Do you think that could be done to the public convenience—for that is the principal object?

*Mr. Edwards*: Yes.

*Mr. McKerrow*: That is, if the porter is competent to do the work?

*Mr. Edwards*: Some suburban stations are being closed for a portion of the day, and made flag-stations the remainder. There are many country stations that could be so worked, where the work is not large enough to keep a stationmaster occupied all day.

*Mr. Hannay*: You surely do not mean to say that the country station should be closed, and the people have no benefit from it?

*Mr. Edwards*: If it is done at suburban stations, why not at the country ones.

*Mr. McKerrow*: Take the place where you were employed—in the Waikato, I believe. If that rule had been applied there, would it not have been to the great inconvenience of the settlers? When did your first train start?

*Mr. Edwards*: I had some trains before nine.

*Mr. McKerrow*: That would bring you to five in the afternoon, and the train passes, say, an hour and a half later. The thing would be absurd.

*Mr. Edwards*: If it would be an inconvenience to the public that I should not be on duty after serving eight hours, it would be in the interests of the department to pay me overtime for the extra work.

*Mr. McKerrow*: That is what you mean?

*Mr. Edwards*: Yes. Our letter says here—"Exceptional cases:" "That no employé on the New Zealand railways shall work more than eight hours per diem or forty-eight hours per week, excepting where absolutely necessary." So that if it is possible for a man to leave off his duty he can do so. If he worked for the eight he would get paid for it.

*Mr. Maxwell*: But Mr. Winter laid it down that it is not a question of work, but of time. Eight hours is the time the man is to be paid for, irrespective of what he is doing or whether he works.