

Mr. Hoban : I do not wish to go into questions about every day's work being carefully considered, but we have abundant evidence, if we like to make it public, that would even make the Commissioners blush. We have sheets, even here in Wellington, to show that men working fourteen or fifteen hours have not been booked off at all, but have been kept standing and been allowed ten hours for it. You seem to admit the principle, and I think, as you have given up that point, you might admit that it is fair that if a man is on duty he should be paid.

Mr. McKerrow : No; I say it is unfair, if a man is standing half-an-hour, to book that; he would simply be on duty. It would be rather dragging it to the extremity.

Mr. Hoban : I give the foremen credit that they give and take a certain amount, but if a man is standing he should be paid while he is on duty. In many cases they are not supposed to put down shunting. They may be at work coaling, firing, &c.; but the work is booked, and the foreman takes what he thinks fit and allows these men. A foreman may not know what the man standing is doing at all, and it is left in the hands of the foreman altogether.

Mr. Rotheram : The foreman knows every man's work every day.

Mr. Hoban : But you give a man charge of an engine, say; the foreman cannot be in the yard all day long, and I may be attending to my engine two or three days for half-an-hour while he is in the office attending to his books, and it is simply guesswork, trying to solve a difficult problem, the solution being left in the hands of the officers. Perhaps I am going outside the question?

Mr. Maxwell : No, that is the question. It is left to each officer to say what is a fair day's work. This is the regulation: "Drivers and firemen will not have their whole time counted from first coming on duty until finally leaving, but only such time as the officer in charge may in each case determine may be fairly counted as working time."

Mr. Hoban : Suppose I return in the "standing" column six hours, and I am working three hours, how is it possible for the officer to know that?

Mr. Maxwell : But the man's duty is known every day. If he has got to water his engine, coal, &c., the foreman knows that.

Mr. Hoban : Something may happen to the engine which takes him a little time to attend to.

Mr. Rotheram : It says that on his report.

Mr. Hoban : But the officer would not know how long it took him to do it.

Mr. Maxwell : Of course, it would be his business to know.

Mr. Hoban : There may be some details put down in the sheet, but if a man repairs a thing himself it is not put in the sheet. It might be some little thing he would not report.

Mr. Maxwell : That would be a very awkward thing for the man if he were found out; everything should be reported.

Mr. Owen : Some men take great pride in working at the engine. Many men in New Zealand have followed the locomotive calling because they have a mechanical turn, and that accounts for them running light and trying to keep the thing in repair. They will do all they can, and in many instances do work they are not supposed to do, simply out of love of an engine, as it were, and a liking to see her working well and clean. Very many times when a man is booked off, though he may not be told to do it, he does go and clean his engine where the cleaner has not touched it.

Mr. Maxwell : Will he not report everything he does?

Mr. Owen : Certainly not.

Mr. Maxwell : Do you not think he ought to do so? Would it not be better?

Mr. Owen : Yes, it might be; but, of course, he is to do no work that his foreman does not tell him.

Mr. Maxwell : But he is supposed to report everything.

Mr. Owen : That order is not a fortnight old.

Mr. Rotheram : No; it is another order you are thinking of.

3. PIECEWORK.

Mr. Hoban : Of course, so far as piecework is concerned I have no actual experience of the matter, and a person should not meddle with tools he does not know, so I shall leave my colleagues to this particular part. I should point out that, in my opinion and in the opinion of my Executive—we have discussed it thoroughly, and I express this in their behalf—the system of piecework is a pernicious one, and destroys good-feeling among men; and, further, that the pay for which it is let to them is unfair. A man gets a contract to repair, at a price which is fixed and labelled on the job (he has no right to say what he will take it for), but finds when he takes it to pieces that there is more work in it than was given out, and therefore he loses by it. The foreman thinks it is fair; he does not. A brass moulder in the shop takes a contract to do, and is assisted by three other tradesmen. He makes a big cheque out of it, but the other three only make an ordinary day's pay, although they work the same as he does. Manifestly, that is unfair. Of course, I am simply giving you rough glimpses of these things.

Mr. McKerrow : I went carefully over all the sheets of this contract-work for March, and I noticed that in every instance the men have made more per day than they would have made by wages; so that that disproves your statement that the men are compelled to work at some job that does not pay them.

Mr. Hoban : Of course, that is not my reasoning. If one man get the work—I am a tradesman, and here is another tradesman: I make £20 or £30; he is quite as good as me, but he only gets an ordinary day's pay. It promotes ill-feeling, and the men themselves would rather have the regular day's pay. Some men, of course, would go and work their lives out; greed is innate in them; and the man who does a fair day's work is looked down upon.

Mr. McKerrow : Apart from the idea of avarice, we all know that between any two workmen there may be very great difference. A good workman, with greater physical advantages, will sometimes do twice the work of a man who has not got the same skill and perfection in his business