

Piecework has this advantage, that a man who does the work gets paid for it according to what he deserves. Take the inferior workman—for, unfortunately, there are such, who cannot get above mediocrity; you can hardly expect to pay good and bad alike! In other words, you would seek to prevent the superior workman getting the advantage of his natural ability and skill.

*Mr. Hoban* : I quite admit that, but the cases are manifestly unfair. However, I will leave the subject to Mr. Winter.

*Mr. Winter* : Piecework has been in vogue for some considerable time in the workshops; and, although it is correct, as you say, that in the greatest number of instances men have probably made a little over wages, still it has been at other sacrifices, and the men have come unanimously to the conclusion that piecework is bad in principle. It is an almost infallible way of reducing the price of labour, and you will see that, if a man is supposed to do a fair day's work and receive a fair wage, directly a way is left open to him to make more money by working extra hard. You thereby reduce the price of that man's labour—you offer a premium to him and appeal to the worst passion of human nature—avarice or greed—and reduce the price of his labour, which by other means might not be practicable. It is almost as bad as giving a man whom you know to be troubled with a suicidal mania a razor, and then, when he has cut his throat, saying, "Well, I did not think he was such a fool! What a fool the man was to cut his throat! I did not give him the razor to do that." It is the same with piecework. You put into the man's hands a means to do what you probably wish done. You might want to reduce the price of labour, and you say, "Very well, we will give him piecework; that's an infallible means. We will reduce the price of labour, and by a gradual process reduce the actual wages." That has been the outcome of it everywhere, and the men working in other countries have proved by experience that wherever piecework has been introduced wages have come down. Therefore we are unanimously of opinion that we should ask you to abolish it. You say a man of greater capacity, ability, and muscular skill will do his work better than a man who has not so much. Now, we quoted Bellamy yesterday; let us quote him now. In the industrial army he pictures each one should have a fair share of the profits, and each one is equally deserving where each does his best, and no man should be condemned to comparative penury and misery because Nature has not endowed him with an equal amount of mental capacity or physical energy as his neighbour.

*Mr. McKerrow*.—That is in the year 2,000.

*Mr. Winter* : We are going that way.

*Mr. Maxwell* : You want to get there before the other fellows?

*Mr. Winter* : I would if I could, but, unfortunately, I am fettered. But that is really the principle. We think it is not fair, because a man is not capable of doing as much work as his neighbour, that he should permanently suffer. The system is bristling with incongruities, too. It has been stated that some classes of work are paid too highly—you admit that. I say that is being done at the expense of muscle and brain. In other classes of work men cannot make wages, and when they have applied to their officers, and shown them that the price had not been sufficiently high, they have not got redress.

*Mr. McKerrow* : I will ask Mr. Rotheram whether, when any case has come before the officers where a man has been working at a job at a price really non-paying, what has been the practice of the department?

*Mr. Rotheram* : Every job is thoroughly considered. The practice in vogue up to the 31st March was, at the end of every period of piecework, to take out a statement showing results where less than full time was made or more than time and a quarter. If necessary, the rate was then adjusted. It has not been adjusted in cases where an inferior man could not make wages and another could make time and a quarter.

*Mr. Winter* : Time and a quarter is never allowed. Time and an eighth has been the instruction.

*Mr. Rotheram* : Will you let me see the instruction?

*Mr. Winter* : I have not got it here.

*Mr. Rotheram* : No; and you cannot produce it.

*Mr. Winter* : I could produce the man who has it.

*Mr. Rotheram* : No such order was ever issued.

*Mr. Winter* : I do not say by you, but by the officers.

*Mr. Rotheram* : I do not think so.

*Mr. Maxwell* : What are your instructions?

*Mr. Rotheram* : Time and a quarter.

*Mr. McKerrow* : For the month of March it is as near as may be time and a quarter.

*Mr. Winter* : I do not dispute that; I only speak as far as instructions are concerned.

*Mr. McKerrow* : As far as you know?

*Mr. Winter* : Well, on information. With regard to repairs done on piecework, it is almost impossible to determine the amount of labour required, and it is merely a speculative thing, and rests entirely with the foremen or the superior officers, who determine the price of a certain work. The thing has been carefully calculated, and they have arrived at a conclusion that certain classes of repairs should be paid at a certain rate. It is hardly possible to calculate that work. Taking the cylinder off an engine, for instance: so much money is allowed, and there may be more work in one instance than another—you could not determine beforehand what the work would be. Forgers and brass-moulders go on piecework, and have men working with them on day-work. The forgers and brass-moulders make time and a quarter, but not more by their own efforts than by those of the men working for them. The other men feel aggrieved at it, and they say, "If there is any more money to be made out of the job let us have a proportionate share of it." Of course, the forger is an exceptional case, I know; but their wages would probably not amount to any more than the present high wages. Smiths on piecework have strikers on day-work. The smith is driving into it all day, and the striker is doing the hardest part of the work.