

years, and the hiatus would have to be filled up with trained men. I want to be clear on this point. We will approximate the thing in good faith. We do not want to steal a march on you. We want to put a few apprentices on, so as not to create a hiatus.

*Mr. Hoban*: There is already an excess of boy-labour in some of the shops. If you bring on more it will be worse.

*Mr. Maxwell*: If two or three go out and only one is put in, that will bring about the proportion gradually.

*Mr. Hoban*: You will work the proportion so as not to bring it down.

*Mr. McKerrow*: We have to work this on a continuous scale. If you are going to have a service you cannot put a break on like that proposed.

*Mr. Hoban*: If an apprentice went out to-morrow you would not put one on in his place? You would only put one on in place of three.

*Mr. McKerrow*: We intend to do only what we say.

*Mr. Hoban*: Yes; but we have to explain to our society. Now with regard to unskilled labour?

*Mr. McKerrow*: We do not propose to have more than one-eighth.

*Mr. Hoban*: And now with regard to cadets?

*Mr. McKerrow*: What I have said I will read again: "For the traffic and general service the number of cadets and lads should remain approximately at the present proportion, which is somewhat below the proportion assigned by the Association. This number is reasonably sufficient to fill vacancies with trained hands as they occur." This branch of the service is different from the mechanical branch. In the latter branch we take in lads to give them an opportunity of learning a trade, but we do not agree to find them employment afterwards. Hence, in some cases the proportion of one in four is greater than the demand to keep up the natural supply. But to have a good railway-man you must catch him young, and train him up to man's estate. We simply take in enough to keep up the supply, not as in the mechanical department.

*Mr. Hoban*: Practically you accept our proposals as to cadets.

*Mr. McKerrow*: We have grouped the traffic and general branches together as lads and cadets generally.

*Mr. Hoban*: If you go that far you take in porters. You do not agree to our proposition of one to three—stationmaster and clerks. You would have the whole service taken together.

*Mr. McKerrow*: The traffic is one branch.

*Mr. Hoban*: Why take in cadets to take the porters' place? I can understand that the cadets are necessary to fill the clerks' places; but why to take the porters' place?

*Mr. McKerrow*: If the porter is a steady and reliable and active lad he carries as it were the marshal's bâton in his knapsack, and may become a stationmaster. I merely make this remark to show clearly that a cadet in any clerical branch and a porter run in grooves, from which they can merge into a higher position. Only the two classes alluded to are associated together.

*Mr. Hoban*: What you tell us about the cadets may be necessary to keep up the clerical staff; but, if that is the case, why not limit them to the clerical staff? Why bring them in as porters?

*Mr. McKerrow*: A lad-porter may merge into a higher class if he have the qualifications.

*Mr. Hoban*: Cadets are trained to go up as clerks and stationmasters. You do not train cadets to be porters, but for clerical work, and you ought to limit the number of cadets to the latter staff.

*Mr. Maxwell*: I think you are laying too much stress on the term "cadet" in comparing him with a lad-porter. Really there is not such a dividing-line as you fancy. They cannot always be separated readily.

*Mr. Hoban*: That is another argument in favour of what I have been saying with regard to the boys. If the porters can fill these positions, you have porters going on and cadets going on.

*Mr. Maxwell*: Only enough in the aggregate to fill the vacancies with the two combined. With the whole group we only have enough to fill the vacancies as they occur.

*Mr. Hoban*: What you mean to say, practically, is that you want openly to take on as many cadets as you choose?

*Mr. Maxwell*: Just so.

*Mr. Hoban*: We cannot agree to that. We must have more limitation as regards boy-labour. The cadets and porters will run out together by-and-by, and I think if the Commissioners took the proportionate number of cadets to the number of the whole traffic department they would be wrong. It is not necessary to waste time in discussing it. You have both cadets and porters eligible to take higher positions.

*Mr. McKerrow*: Yes.

*Mr. Winter*: The whole statement is so vague that it requires great consideration to understand it. It would be better to have it before us in writing. You appear to have made concessions, but they do not seem to be concessions at all. I do not consider that you have conceded one point. You always reserve the right to alter the regulations, and it rests with the Commissioners to say whether the conditions are in force or not. You are the judge of your own conditions. We have nothing definite from our point of view. We have put the question very plainly. You say there shall be a less number of boys, but reserve your right to increase them. We wish you to have a certain proportion of boys, cadets included.

*Mr. McKerrow*: We have said so.

*Mr. Winter*: But it will not take effect for a hundred years.

*Mr. McKerrow*: This decision was stated with no after-consideration that the Commissioners would break faith with you. I wish to state that you cannot make these alterations in a day.

*Mr. Winter*: But how much time will elapse? Every one of us will be dead and gone and forgotten before we could say the Commissioners had broken faith with us. You have stretched the time so long.