

say—he would find this on record, and would perhaps alter it; but if it was a regulation, and was recorded as an intention to be carried into practice that no more boys should be taken on than allowed by the proportion we require, then there is no getting away from it. Why, we are discussing a term of four years, and we do not know what may happen in that time.

*Mr. Maxwell*: Say three.

*Mr. McKerrow*: Do you think it an unreasonable proposition, Mr. Elvines, that I have made just to graduate the process, so as not to have a great gap in apprentice-labour?

*Mr. Elvines*: I think it rather unreasonable in the way you put it. At the present time you have so many young boys. It will be a hard job to find them that amount of employment that is suited to them after teaching them their trade. You have so many young boys that there is a difficulty in teaching them their trade.

*Mr. McKerrow*: I wish to obviate that.

*Mr. Elvines*: You want to keep the youngest down for two years, then you must take no more on for two years, and at the end of the two years there will be more of the higher class. Unfortunately, the poor boys are now thrown upon the world unable to find employment at their trade. What we particularly want is not to flood one shop.

*Mr. McKerrow*: That is clearly brought out, and we intend to adopt that principle. I have said that here. I think we undertake to take on as few as possible, and bring down the proportion as rapidly as possible; that would be reasonable.

*Mr. Winter*: You could not possibly bring them down to the number in two years. Some have seven years to serve.

*Mr. Maxwell*: No; only four or five. You may have ten or a dozen coming out in one year. It is a material reduction. Take Addington for instance.

*Mr. Owen*: There are too many there; you will hardly feel it.

*Mr. Elvines*: Some shops may be flooded. It is that shop we ask you to keep down. You really ought not to take on any more for two years if any shop is flooded.

*Mr. Rotheram*: I do not think any shop is flooded.

*Mr. Winter*: Twenty-five to forty-eight. I think you must have a poor conception of what flooding is. What I wish to draw particular attention to is, that two years' boys will make very little difference. You could very well spare the first two years; and then, if you are allowed to take on one for every three discharged, you would keep up as good a proportion as you want in that particular shop. Some shops, with not too many boys, you could work as you thought fit. I know very well that when boys are first apprenticed they are just feeling their way about the shop.

*Mr. McKerrow*: That seems reasonable. The proposal is that, where the number is above the proportion, no apprentice shall be taken on for two years; after that, if the proportion is more than one to four, one shall be taken on to three going off until the adjustment is made.

*Mr. Rotheram*: In Napier we cannot get boys.

*Mr. Owen*: Take them from the flooded shops, and transfer them to another.

*Mr. Rotheram*: I wish we could do that.

*Mr. Haden*: In speaking of the cadets on the clerical staff, I did not show you its excess. There are nine cadets to seventeen clerks in Lyttelton. The effect is that, where they have succeeded in attaining the maximum, a stoppage takes place. That point seems to me conclusive that they are in excess. When a man dies or retires from the service, there have been cases where, in the case of a £140-grade man, a man or lad at £105 has been put on.

*Mr. Maxwell*: At no increase?

*Mr. Haden*: Only at the particular scale of four or five years' service. Before getting the maximum you might stop indefinitely—you might stop fifty years. It is possible to stop an indefinite time. As we have been speaking about flooding the workshops, I should like to see a stop put to the flooding of the clerical branch, and cadets only taken on according to the proportion. A clerk has skill; if he is to be proficient he has to be educated; and we think that, as many would never go to fill a porter's place, all the channels of promotion should be open to every one. I presume it would not be impossible for a platelayer to become a traffic-manager; but, of course, we do not see many such instances. If a cadet could rise to a stationmaster he would be on the same footing as a platelayer, who, if exceptional, would also rise. But, still, there is no reason why any particular place should be flooded with young labour, to the detriment of all; and this is the reason why we want the restriction in particular places.

*Mr. Maxwell*: If you restrict the cadets you would have to import outside clerical labour. We have ceased to do that. It is a very costly thing to do to go out of the Railway Department and get men unaccustomed to railway work. We have limited ourselves only to taking on lads, taking no adult man in that branch of the service.

*Mr. McKerrow*: There is no taking-on of lads to get rid of adult labour.

*Mr. Winter*: I apprehend that in taking on young labour so excessively you wish to have a large young nation.

*Mr. Hannay*: I think it has been shown in evidence that we take a lad into the service to train him up. We do not take off a man and put a lad on in his place. Some men have been ten or eleven years with us who all started with us as lads; and I may say the attempt to recruit with men was not successful.

*Mr. Maxwell*: It was entirely unsuccessful, and we have entirely dropped it. Your own case is one of the last where adults were brought in in that way.

*Mr. Winter*: I do not wish to stipulate that adult labour should be taken on; I only wish to point out that we do not want boy labour out of proportion in any department of the service.

*Mr. Hannay*: If you do not take up lads you must go outside.

*Mr. Winter*: The number seems in excess.

*Mr. Hannay*: Take your own staff at Lyttelton: Suppose instead of nine cadets there were