

*Mr. Elvines* : And what with regard to platelayers who run their trollies in the morning ?

*Mr. Maxwell* : That is in extreme cases of men going out to their work.

*Mr. Elvines* : That is an ordinary occurrence with the whole of them.

*Mr. Hoban* : The platelayers' gang are paid for one way on the other side ; the other way is not counted. I am referring to platelayers inspecting the lines.

*Mr. Maxwell* : They live in such a position that they can travel along the line to work and do their inspection at the same time.

*Mr. Elvines* : They have to carry their material and their tools.

*Mr. Lowe* : They do not carry their tools or material every day. They leave their tools where they left off at night.

*Mr. Elvines* : But if they want extra materials they carry them in the morning.

*Mr. Edwards* : Platelayers might be walking the length in addition to the day's work. In some sections they work before 8 o'clock in the morning.

*Mr. McKerrow* : It is very difficult to lay down strict rules in these matters, circumstances vary so much. It is best to leave it in the hands of the District Engineers to arrange matters fairly with the men. You cannot lay down cast-iron rules to meet all these cases.

*Mr. Edwards* : Where a man has to go a long distance he ought to be paid for it.

*Mr. McKerrow* : But he is simply inspecting the line as he goes along. Unless a man went blindfolded he could not help seeing the line. It comes in just the same as a man walking to his work.

*Mr. Edwards* : It does not follow that he should inspect the work. That is a different circumstance.

*Mr. McKerrow* : Another thing : The men work together ; one man lives at the end of the section, and another lives at the other end ; all have to start work at the same time : you must have them meeting at a regular time.

*Mr. Edwards* : Could you not rule that where platelayers work before 8 o'clock you would make it time over, or allow them time off ?

*Mr. McKerrow* : Time off does not do with platelayers, because they have to work together.

*Mr. Maxwell* : Mr. Lowe tells me that the average distance to be travelled is about three miles—half an hour each way. With velocipedes that would be very little. Some cases would be very difficult to deal with. For many years we have been fixing the platelayers' houses to prevent undue hardship. We could alter them in different parts of the country. The difficulty has been that the railways have been rapidly extending, and when an extension has been added it has upset the previously-existing arrangements.

*Mr. Edwards* : But in some cases a man has to go out very early.

*Mr. Maxwell* : If he has to go to work at a very early hour he is paid for it. Of course you are aware that platelayers are paid wet or dry, and cannot work, sometimes, at all. If it is wet all stay off. The extra walking will just about balance the time he is off in wet weather.

*Mr. Edwards* : I know some have to walk the length independent of their work, and we would like you to pay for that.

*Mr. Winter* : Do we understand that where a man has to walk the length he will be paid for it. If one has to go in one direction to work, and in another direction to inspect the length, he must start sufficiently early to enable him to get back.

*Mr. Lowe* : That is on account of the position of his house. But by enforcing the rule you would have to make him shift his house. If two men live, one at one end of the length and the other at the other end, they could meet at some place between the two points.

*Mr. Hoban* : I presume, where there are special circumstances you will take them into consideration.

*Mr. McKerrow* : Certainly.

*Mr. Hoban* : Then I understand the whole of our proposals are adopted with the exception of the hours of labour ?

*Mr. McKerrow* : Yes—intermittent labour.

*Mr. Hoban* : I am sorry we must part without that. I would sooner see us part in a friendly way.

*Mr. Winter* : We understand you positively decline to consider the forty-eight hours ?

*Mr. McKerrow* : Yes.

*Mr. Winter* : And you will not go to arbitration ?

*Mr. McKerrow* : We have no power to do so.

*Mr. Winter* : I have been talking to my colleagues, and would like to settle the question amicably. Are you prepared to meet us a little further, and say fifty-four hours shall be a week's work ? We pledge ourselves to take that back and do our best to make the men contented with it.

*Mr. McKerrow* : We will think of it. When will you be leaving, Mr. Hoban ?

*Mr. Hoban* : To-morrow morning, if possible.

*Mr. Owen* : Gentlemen, I would ask you to consider it. God knows we would rather do anything than leave you in this hostile way. We would rather go away and say, " They are jolly good fellows, and we got our way fine with them." I would impress upon you, sir, and beg you, sooner than drive the men away, to thoroughly consider this thing and concede it. If you look it over, it is only the same as New South Wales is doing now, and they are wanting more. I would ask you as emphatically as I can to consider it in all its favourable points. I think I can say you will, as reasonable gentlemen, sooner than let things go on as they are likely to drift, concede it. It is not asking such a great amount. The wave is going all over the world for eight hours. Can you not meet us half-way ?

*Mr. McKerrow* : I think we do. We have met you three-quarters.