

Mr. Owen : I can hardly see that. What you have conceded to the locomotive department is three hours' standing; but that is allowed in all parts of the world. I have looked through the thing, and the conditions of service in all parts of the world—in fact, I have spent something in trying to get this information from persons in all parts of the world; and if you look at it from a reasonable point of view you will see that it is fair. Why not do as New South Wales did years ago?

Mr. McKerrow : Fifty-five hours?

Mr. Owen : Well, fifty-four. We would not quarrel about that.

Mr. McKerrow : We will consider; the proposal but do not push us for a few days for our reply. We have to go into the matter and consider the finances, and also how it will affect the service. We do not expect you to wait here, but we will correspond with your secretary or Mr. Hoban, and send our reply.

Mr. Winter : We should like to have a reply to-day, so as to enable us to take this information down with us.

Mr. McKerrow : We cannot do that.

Mr. Owen : We would rather stop.

Mr. McKerrow : No; I should not like to ask you to stop.

Mr. Owen : We came up to get a definite understanding, and should not like to go away without it.

Mr. Maxwell : We do not want to oblige you to go away, but we cannot look into it under a few days.

Mr. McKerrow : How about your time, Mr. Hoban?

Mr. Hoban : I would like to go back with my colleagues with something to take to the men. I should be glad to take the news to Christchurch, and I would prefer to wait a few days to receive it. As an officer of the society, I should like to carry my duties to a successful issue. Seeing that you have granted the other concessions, I think you will have no occasion to regret going a little further.

Mr. McKerrow : Will you wait until Wednesday?

Mr. Hoban : Yes.

Mr. McKerrow : Very well; we will try and settle the matter by that time.

Mr. Hoban : I have to thank you very much for the courteous manner in which you have treated us generally, and in any other matters that may come up I should like you to treat us in a similar way.

WEDNESDAY, 25TH JUNE, 1890.

The Commissioners met the delegates at 11 a.m.

Mr. McKerrow : Mr. Hoban, when we rose on Saturday we had practically settled everything with the exception of the week's time for drivers, firemen, and guards, the difference being as between sixty hours for a week's work and forty-eight hours. You remember that after the discussion you proposed to compromise with fifty-four hours. I may say that, after careful consideration, the Commissioners have decided to accept your proposal.

Mr. Hoban : We have to thank you for the concession. When we made the suggestion we had no desire to affect the Eight Hours Bill, and, although we understood there was a grievance of that kind, we tried to meet you in as fair a way as possible.

Mr. McKerrow : There is one point I would like to mention with regard to the platelayers—

Mr. Hoban :—Where one of the gang has to inspect the line before doing his ordinary work, would he be paid for it?

Mr. McKerrow : I think it would be difficult to lay down a cast-iron rule. I think that can be left to the officers to decide.

Mr. Hoban : I think you will take the matter into consideration, and allow them something off per mile. I will ask you to give us a letter showing the concessions allowed by you, so that we can show it when we go back, and let the branches know all over the colony; and, as we have to get away this afternoon, I will just thank you, on behalf of the delegates, for your courtesy in giving us free passes over the lines. I dare say you will be glad that the men are getting back to their work. We have enjoyed the trip very much indeed; and I hope that in future, if there are any difficulties, we shall be able to settle them in an amicable manner.

Mr. McKerrow : I may say, to prevent any misunderstanding in future, that if there are any exceptional cases with regard to the hours we shall have to treat them on their merits. On some of the branch lines it would be impossible to carry the principle out to the letter.

Mr. Hoban : We admitted that there were exceptional cases. We merely wanted the rule adopted. That is all, I think, unless any of my colleagues have a word to say.

Mr. Winter : I have to thank you for having conceded our requests and obviated future difficulties in the working of the line. The servants of the colony will be grateful to you for granting their requests. And I must also thank you for the way in which you have treated us since we have been here. I have appreciated it very much.

Mr. Hoban : If the stationmasters and outside porters can have their hours of labour cut down at all, will you see that that is done?

Mr. McKerrow : Yes.

Mr. Hoban : Thank you.

Mr. McKerrow : Does any one else wish to make a remark?

Mr. Owen : There is rather an awkward question with regard to locomotive-men going on in the morning. The firemen and guards, as a rule, go on forty-five minutes before starting. The drivers go on half an hour before, but on the big engines they cannot get the train ready and the wagons out of the siding in half an hour. There is a difficulty in that direction.