

*Mr. Owen* : With regard to the locomotive department—cleaners—the Executive think that the age of cleaners should not be less than eighteen and firemen twenty-one. It is a very awkward thing to get a lad on an engine with you to go out, say, on a goods-train. We think twenty-one years is quite young enough for a lad to turn fireman as a rule, and that the pay of a lad or cleaner when he reaches the age of twenty-one, or verging on it, which is supposed to be man's estate, should not be less than 7s. a day. That is according to the scale of pay that was in vogue.

*Mr. McKerrow* : Five shillings and sixpence a day.

*Mr. Owen* : I mean previous to that being issued. I do not think you will find it an unreasonable request. To clean an engine is dirty work, and ruins the boys' clothes, because a boy would do it as much with his clothes as with his hands. Another thing is that you do not treat all the boys alike in your service. Take the boy in the traffic department, you give him a suit of clothes ; in the cleaning department you give him the same pay, dirtier work, and nothing extra. This work is so thoroughly dirty that the boy of sixteen, who ought to be at school, cleans his engine with his clothes instead of with waste, which he does not know how to use—in fact, he is too young altogether. And you see you handicap the boy in the locomotive department by giving him the same pay as you give another lad who is employed in a clean capacity. Those boys are not fairly treated, and we would impress on the Commissioners that the age of a cleaner should be not less than eighteen years, and that of a fireman not less than twenty-one. I think 7s. a day for cleaners at the age of twenty-one is nothing more than reasonable.

*Mr. McKerrow* : Your suggestions will be considered.

*Mr. Maxwell* : I suppose you know it has never been the practice to put on men as firemen under twenty-one years.

*Mr. Owen* : It has been done.

*Mr. Maxwell* : It must have been very rare.

*Mr. Owen* : Well, there are instances of it. I do not say that it is made a practice of.

*Mr. Maxwell* : I do not think any one could ever have intended to make a practice of it.

*Mr. Owen* : No, but it has been done.

*Mr. Rotheram* : Only under great emergency.

*Mr. Owen* : It is all very well, in the interests of economy, to cut things very fine, but sometimes they are cut so fine that there are very few men about, and that is why that question cropped up. It has been started, and that may be the thin end of the wedge. I do not say it has been done with Mr. Rotheram's sanction, or that of the head of the department ; but there are many things done, I assure you, that the heads do not know anything about.

*Mr. Maxwell* : I do not think there should be any difficulty about keeping up the ages of firemen, and cleaners too. Our former regulations made the age seventeen ; sixteen is too young. I think, in a general way, if any one has been put as a fireman under the age of twenty-one it has been a mistake, or done under very great pressure.

*Mr. Rotheram* : Only in cases of great emergency.

*Mr. McKerrow* : I think we shall be able to meet you there.

*Mr. Elwines* : And with regard to cleaners ?

*Mr. McKerrow* : Yes ; I think that is very reasonable.

*Mr. Hoban* : In New South Wales they will not take a cleaner under the age of eighteen years. Of course it is very evident that when a young fellow goes into an engine-shed it is dirty work ; and there can be no question work of that kind should be given to men, who are able to stand greater hardship. I am told it is very hard work. Boys may do it after a fashion, but they ought to have somebody to look after them. The traffic department object to boy-labour being employed in shunting, which is very dangerous work ; and we refer you to the decision of the jury in the matter of the boy recently killed in Dunedin.

*Mr. Maxwell* : He was not a shunter.

*Mr. Hoban* : This is what we have received from Dunedin. I do not know it of my own knowledge, but I simply put it before you as what we have been informed. In Dunedin, in the smiths' shops there are eleven adults and twelve boys ; in the fitting-shop, nineteen adults and nineteen boys ; and in the boilermakers' shop, five men and six boys ; and in the painters' shop the proportion of boys is three to two. Boys and apprentices are all counted together, evidently. If this is so, it is manifestly unfair.

*Mr. Maxwell* : Do you know what the nineteen adults are in the fitters' shop—are they nineteen fitters ?

*Mr. Hoban* : That I could not say. I simply give you the information as I got it.

*Mr. Haden* : There is a clause in our letter of the 29th of March relating to cadets : " It is deemed necessary that there shall not be a greater number of cadets in the service at any time than one to every three stationmasters and clerks, and that any person having served five years as a cadet shall be rated as a clerk, and receive his salary accordingly." As I pointed out, the lads are taken on at £30 a year, and go up, by increases of £15, to £105.

*Mr. Hannay* : £110 now. It has been £110 for two or three years.

*Mr. Haden* : Well, I have got a list here, and I have spoken to these young fellows, who told me it was £105 they stopped at.

*Mr. Hannay* : Yes, but they started at £50.

*Mr. Haden* : I am told that they are paid as I say, and get £105 when they arrive at maturity.

*Mr. Hannay* : Yes ; but they started at £50 a year, not £30.

*Mr. Haden* : Well, that is immaterial ; but in these cases they stop at £105. If they do not it is not too much to say that they have got a friend at court that gets the increase for them. Our letter asks that when they have served five years they should be rated as clerks, and paid accordingly ; and, as it takes them five years to get to £140 a year, when a young fellow will be about twenty-five years of age, I think if the man has not proved his worth for the salary by the time it