

properly he will be hauled over the coals, fined, or dismissed. Our contention is that non-skilled men ought to start at the bottom, and get a machine in course of time; and that when one is put to a machine his wages should at once be raised to those of a machinist. At present every man put on a machine remains at labourers' wages. If we wish to fire a man's ambition to rise as high as he can rise, he must be assured of having benefits when he shows his capacity. If we are good workmen as labourers, and become machinists, we should know that we shall also have machinists' money; but for a long time past that has not been the case—boys have been put on machines, and labourers who have got machines have worked them at labourer's wages. The old answer has always been, "We can't give you a rise at present."

*Mr. Hoban*: I think, gentlemen, we have gone into the subject pretty deeply. I do not know when you propose to give us an answer.

*Mr. McKerrow*: Not until after the interview is over. After the report is written down in manuscript each gentleman will have the opportunity of looking over it, as to its correctness and otherwise; and it is just possible that reading it over may suggest something one would like to bring forward. As to boy-labour, we are practically agreed upon it. We cannot follow all the details you have brought forward—it is difficult to follow them all through, but the principle is pretty well established between us—that we will restrict the boy-labour—in other words, will not flood the workshops with the idea of superseding men whom we may call skilled workmen.

*Mr. Elvines*: But would you restrict them to the proportion?

*Mr. Maxwell*: Yes; we are under the proportion now.

*Mr. Elvines*: But in the particular shops?

*Mr. McKerrow*: I tried to explain that also; that it would be inconvenient to confine it to each particular shop. There might be, as you seem to have evidence to show, a great deal over it at Addington and Hillside, but it is just possible that the other shops may be less.

*Mr. Elvines*: But you can control them.

*Mr. McKerrow*: There is a good deal of force in what you say. If there are too many apprentices they only stand in each others way. I think, if you leave it in our hands, we will work it in a reasonable way, and this discussion will help very much to carry it out. The interchange of opinions will have a very good effect. For myself, I acknowledge I have had a good deal of information that I was not possessed of before. But I should not like for us to part in any undecided understanding that we should have a "cast-iron rule," which must not be infringed.

*Mr. Elvines*: We have pointed out that our allowance is a more liberal one than in other trades. If you take that into consideration you might give us the "cast-iron rule."

*Mr. McKerrow*: Well, I will ask Mr. Rotheram; he is the gentleman who works the mechanical branch. I apprehend there would be no difficulty in it if the deputation keep within the limit they have assigned. They have stated very reasonably and fairly that they do not expect us immediately to recognise it, but to work towards it.

*Mr. Rotheram*: We can do it quite easily if the whole of the shops are combined, but we cannot do it very well if we take each individual shop.

*Mr. McKerrow*: But we can keep it as a principle to try and work up to. I do not think you can ask us more.

*Mr. Elvines*: Well, we make you a very liberal allowance.

*Mr. McKerrow*: There is a difficulty in the smaller shops, not in the large ones.

*Mr. Winter*: Regarding Mr. Rotheram's statement, if it is practicable in the whole of the shops, why not in any one? Our letter states that we are quite willing that the smaller shops shall have one apprentice, and only one additional apprentice to every four men.

*Mr. McKerrow*: So that with five men there are two apprentices?

*Mr. Winter*: Yes.

*Mr. Elvines*: And one improver.

*Mr. Winter*: We do not want to run any risk whatever, but we realise that if we want to keep our positions as workmen we must limit the number of boys.

*Mr. McKerrow*: Yes; I think we understand each other, and I promise we shall work towards it. Will you leave it in that way?

*Mr. Elvines*: But we may leave it, and you will go beyond it.

*Mr. McKerrow*: But you must remind us.

*Mr. Edwards*: If you recognise that as the proportion, do all in your power to come to it, and accept the society to point out these matters to you, I think there is no difficulty.

*Mr. Maxwell*: With reference to cadets: one to every three stationmasters would not work in practice. The stationmaster at a country station requires a lad. We cannot put a man to do a boy's work.

*Mr. Elvines*: We class stationmasters and clerks together. The boys could learn their work with the stationmasters at small stations, and when they are sufficiently advanced be drafted into the goods-sheds as clerks. I think you will find, if you work it out as we have done, that it is really a thing you can carry out very well. Instead of having a large number of boys in the offices in the large centres you have them in the small stations, and when they come to the age of clerks you draft them back to the goods-sheds as clerks.

*Mr. Maxwell*: I think we shall have to work in the opposite direction. As far as my experience goes, it is not convenient to send the boy to the country station where his parents do not live. In most cases we draw our cadets from the towns, where they live with their parents. When they have learned their duties they are sent up to the country stations, but we cannot get lads in the country as a general rule.

*Mr. Edwards*: The apprentices and unskilled labour are in a different position to the cadets. We do not say they must be in that proportion in every station. There are plenty of stations where a great number of clerks are employed, and when you come to put these stationmasters and clerks together you will find that leaves plenty of boys for the stations you speak of. The proportion of cadets is taking the service as a whole.