

Mr. Hannay : How do you arrive at this proportion as a reasonable number? I think you know that the reason we have these cadets is to train them to the work. I mean, how do you arrive at the conclusion that that is a proper number? You must bear in mind the cadets are not like apprentices; we are really taking lads for the service who may be all their lives in it; and, speaking from experience of twenty-five years, I say there is no other way of training a man to railway work. All railway corporations have come to that conclusion—that you must take the lads and teach them their business—and we certainly take no lads that we do not want to have as men. We do not pay them off when their time is up, and one of the greatest difficulties we have had is this: that a dozen years ago, when we could not get lads to train, we had to take men who had not the necessary experience, and could not be trained like lads who are learning their trade, and are not such good railway men. I have a strong opinion on this matter—that in the railway business, as in all others, you must learn it.

Mr. Haden : My contention is that there seems to be too many of them. When they have finished their time they stop at that. I cannot swear to it, but instances have been given to me as facts where cadets were kept two years at the one rate. That points to the fact that when they have arrived at maturity—when you have trained them up—you are obliged to keep them two years stationary because you have not got vacancies. It shows you are in excess. In Lyttelton, as I mentioned, we have nine cadets, and when an extra clerk is wanted to tally at the ship's side one of the cadets walking about looking for a job is sent, and takes a man's place. Had there been sufficient work he would have been drafted away as soon as there was a vacancy.

Mr. Maxwell : In many cases young men are not promoted from cadetships because they have not done their work satisfactorily, and have not improved so as to be fit to be promoted. They must stop until they are fit to be promoted, though there are not very many of these instances.

Mr. Haden : Even so; that points to what I said—that it is a cruel kindness to keep some of them on—and if they show these faults while they are actually learning their trade I do not think they will improve. The greatest kindness to such a boy would be to tell him he has mistaken his vocation, and let him apply elsewhere.

Mr. Maxwell : You think he ought to be discharged at once?

Mr. Haden : I think so. I think it is cruel to bring him up to a trade which his disposition shows he will never get on at.

Mr. Maxwell : That is a matter of opinion; we must always use discretionary power. It does not follow because a lad has not behaved himself while he was growing up that he will be vicious and bad as a man. Every lad must have a chance.

Mr. Hannay : You will find in actual experience and practice that the parents and guardians of these lads, and the lads themselves, would feel very much aggrieved if we were so hard as you think us. We have got the name of being hard with the men, but you would have us whip them with scorpions.

Mr. Haden : I was replying to Mr. Maxwell.

Mr. Maxwell : In many cases lads who have completed their cadetships are promoted immediately. There are wide differences between men.

Mr. Haden : I can only speak of those who have come under my notice. I never saw anything like that.

Mr. Maxwell : Have you ever been in charge of any cadets yourself?

Mr. Haden : No.

Mr. Maxwell : Well, those who have been in charge must be the judges.

Mr. Hoban : I think the proportion is a very fair one. If a young fellow at £105 is shifted on to do higher work, and does not get higher pay—

Mr. Hannay : Not necessarily.

Mr. Hoban : Well, it does happen, I know, because the young fellows have told me, and I have made inquiries and found it to be so. As Mr Haden says, an instance happened only the other day, and that was in one particular spot. There are instances all over the colony. We say one to every three stationmasters and clerks is a fair proportion—that is a third, and I do not think that is unfair.

Mr. Hannay : No; only a fourth.

Mr. Hoban : Yes; a fourth. I do not think it is unreasonable.

The Conference adjourned at 1 o'clock and resumed at 3.

Mr. Hoban : With respect to boy-labour, have we any understanding between ourselves as to what you intend to do?

Mr. McKerrow : I thought we agreed before we left off that we would see all the report in manuscript—or print, which would perhaps be better—so that each one could look over what he had stated, and if he wished to make any further remarks he would do so. So that, for the present, we leave it at that stage, until you have seen the printed report.

Mr. Hoban : Yes; our business here is to see this matter settled.

2. HOURS OF LABOUR.

Mr. McKerrow : As to hours of labour, we have before us what you wish to be adopted.

Mr. Hoban : Well, that is what we say should be adopted. Of course, we do not care to go into instances which we might quote to show whether the thing is fair or not. We know long hours have been worked, but we do not want to quote instances of men who have been working fifteen or sixteen hours a day, because we know it has been done. We want to have some universal system established, and suggest that the eight hours system be adopted on the railways, as in other places.

Mr. McKerrow : Do you mean by eight hours, from the beginning until the man finishes off—from his going on up to his coming off? There are engine-drivers and firemen, for instance: do you mean eight hours work? They sometimes work ten.