

*Mr. Hoban:* Well, we remedy that by saying the men shall work forty-eight hours a week. We do not care how it is made up. If a man is on fourteen hours to-day and ten to-morrow, that is twenty-four. But to say that a man shall work fourteen hours a day, we do not agree to that. We have thought this matter out in all its bearings, and we have consulted large employers of labour in Christchurch and elsewhere, and they all agree with us that this is right, and, moreover, they say they could see their way to working it. What is to prevent you allowing a man to go home after doing his forty-eight hours' work? Instead of getting 3 per cent. profit on the railway you would let the people spend it amongst themselves. Instead of one man getting a lot of overtime, let him spend it among the community, many of whom are living on charitable aid at the present time. Do not think I am putting this in an antagonistic spirit. I am simply putting it in a fair light. I have spoken, as I say, to competent men on the subject, and there is no reason why an evil which has existed for years should not now be redressed.

*Mr. McKerrow:* Is it an evil?

*Mr. Hoban:* If you keep a man staying at work for fourteen hours a day, and that is not an evil, what is? If any fair-minded man, or the public, say it is not, the railway service will not say it is.

*Mr. McKerrow:* But the man only works four or six hours next day.

*Mr. Hoban:* But in Christchurch they do not do that. Of course we do not mention names.

*Mr. McKerrow:* I may tell you, with reference to the fourteen hours' man I mentioned, the driver got his 12s. a day and 2s. 9d. per day extra, in consideration of partially standing and extra duty. His pay was 14s. 9d. per day for the month of March last.

*Mr. Hoban:* Well, I assure you I could give you instances that would make even the Commissioners blush, and you would be surprised at such instances. I have the men's sheets before me, and I know of instances where men have earned overtime, and for perhaps twelve hours have received a couple of shillings. We do not wish to mention any of the men by name. We desire to go on a broad principle. The eight hours' system has been recognised everywhere, even by the great Emperor of Germany; and when we find employers all over the world taking up this principle, I think it is time we in the colonies took it up. We do not want our men to be oppressed.

*Mr. McKerrow:* Notwithstanding the disabilities under which you think the drivers are placed, the men themselves are very glad to get this opportunity of serving the department, and they prefer the longer day of fourteen hours to the short one.

*Mr. Hoban:* I do not wish to contradict that statement, but I can assure you we have correspondence with the different branches—and we include nearly the whole of the railway men in the colony—and I do not think that throughout the whole length and breadth of New Zealand you would find that so. Of course, if an individual driver is asked by his foreman, "What do you want?" it is not likely he will tell him, because the men have been afraid to speak their minds.

*Mr. McKerrow:* It is a great pity that they should be.

*Mr. Hoban:* Well, it is an acknowledged fact, I can assure you. You are under a wrong impression, for the drivers are prepared to work eight hours, and do not want to make overtime. They do not want to make money. They say, "Give us eight hours a day, and, if you want twelve hours a day, pay us overtime;" but what they want is that, if you desire men to work sixteen hours a day, you should give eight to them, and employ some other man for the other eight.

*Mr. McKerrow:* I will ask you this question, Mr. Rotheram: Is it not a fact that the men prefer the overtime, so far as is known to you?

*Mr. Rotheram:* It is a fact throughout the colony.

*Mr. Hoban:* The Sweating Commission which went round the colony sat at Christchurch, and the evidence then given would have surprised you. These men stated facts, and they would tell you now that they prefer the eight hours. Although the foreman speaks what he thinks is right, I assure you they do want eight hours, and do not care about the overtime. I speak of what I know; I come into contact with these men.

*Mr. McKerrow:* I do not doubt that, but your information is different from ours.

*Mr. Hoban:* We who mix with the men are in a different circle. You, if you will allow me to say so, are on a high pedestal. When the men have a grievance naturally they come to us. Suppose they went to Mr. Rotheram and said, "We want eight hours a day." He would say, "Who are you? The service cannot stand it. Certainly not." They know they are in that position.

*Mr. Owen:* With regard to eight hours, it has been adopted by some railways, and I say what has been adopted we in New Zealand surely will not be behind. It was quite different years ago. I can remember well enough when it was "eight hours' work, eight hours' play, and 8s. a day." Eight hours is constituted a legal day in the colony, and why should it not be adopted in all departments? I can remember when ten hours a day was adopted for the drivers and firemen on account of the intermittent services, and they were paid two hours extra to make up what was considered an equal day with the man working eight hours. But those days have gone by, and we are progressing. Eight hours has been adopted in other countries.

*Mr. McKerrow:* What do you mean by "other countries"?

*Mr. Owen:* Other railway countries.

*Mr. McKerrow:* England?

*Mr. Owen:* Well, we came out here to better our position, and when we left England we left Old-Country associations behind. No doubt we all came out here—or some of us did—to better ourselves, and we would rather leave the Old Country behind us in this as we did when we got on board ship. I think it is hardly fair to introduce that now.

*Mr. McKerrow:* I thought of England as the great railway country.

*Mr. Owen:* There are bigger railway countries than England. Do you know what they are doing in New South Wales, compared with our request? There they ask for 120 miles to be paid for