

a day's pay, passenger-trains, the first twenty-five miles after that to be paid as a quarter of a day, and the next twenty-five or fraction of twenty-five to be paid as another quarter. If I may be allowed to quote an instance, we run from Christchurch to Oamaru with the express: if you pay that by what I have said the New South Wales men are asking for, you would pay a day and a half for that 153 miles. But we are not asking that; we do not want anything unreasonable; we simply want what we think is a fair thing; if it is not fair, we leave it to any one else to say so. We only ask for a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, in keeping with the progress of the times. In New South Wales they want 90 miles with a mixed train or goods to count as a day's work; the first twenty miles after that to be paid for as another quarter, and the next twenty or fraction of twenty as another quarter. If you will follow me, that is 180 miles for a day and a half. We ask for nothing of that sort. We do not ask you to raise our wages, and you will admit that on the other side of the water, which is not so very far off, the men are more highly paid.

*Mr. McKerrow*: Yes.

*Mr. Owen*: With regard to intermittent time, it is not stopped elsewhere. You have quoted England, but it is not stopped there.

*Mr. McKerrow*: But the English service is very different from a colonial one—in this respect, that there you are able to employ a man all the time, and there is very little stopping time: here we have so many branch-lines that intermittent service is forced on the management; we cannot help it.

*Mr. Owen*: No doubt it is reasonable to a certain extent. These lines have not been built on commercial principles, and certainly it is very difficult to run them on commercial principles.

*Mr. McKerrow*: I am glad you admit that.

*Mr. Owen*: We can all acknowledge that, and see that the difficulty of your position as Commissioners is mightily enhanced thereby. A railway in England is built more as a commercial transaction, and run accordingly. Out here the railways have been built to a certain extent by politics, and partly, no doubt, to open up the country and obviate the necessity of making roads. Of course, it is very difficult to make a dividend or profit from such lines. We recognise the difficulties, but the difficulties do not undermine the principle, which is, a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. We do not ask you to increase the pay, and I think you will admit that we are not overpaid compared with men on the other side of the water. I have here an engine-man's sheet from New South Wales, where a man runs five hours ten minutes, stands five hours fifty minutes, has an hour (which the Commissioners have admitted is a reasonable time) to prepare his engine for the road, that totals up to twelve hours (This is a tramway sheet: tramway-men are not paid at the same rate as the men on the railway-lines), and he receives for that twelve hours one day and a third. You will notice that they stop nothing for standing. The same thing in America. We can show instances there where a man working five days of eight hours in the week receives £36 for the month's work. We do not ask for any of these big things, but we are to a certain extent unselfish. If overtime is required then employ another man. We would rather that, in place of paying a man a day and a half for a long run, you should employ another man and pay him.

*Mr. McKerrow*: Yes, I understand.

*Mr. Owen*: We do not ask you to increase the pay in any way at all; we are prepared to let it go as it is; but we want you to allow us some little time. I dare say you gentlemen have read "Looking Backward"?

*The Commissioners*: Yes.

*Mr. Owen*: Well, we would like to have a little time with our families. It is not a nice thing being away so much.

*Mr. McKerrow*: I have explained that this is arranged by the man having time off. If he has a long run, he runs five days a week, and has two days off.

*Mr. Owen*: But I think you will find, if you make inquiries, that there is not much of that.

*Mr. McKerrow*: The men do not like time off, I am informed.

*Mr. Owen*: I do not want to gainsay any statement; I simply state facts, and you will find we shall be well satisfied if you give us what we ask—not an increase, but a fair day's pay and a fair day's work—and you will have no grievances or grumbling. We will all do our best, as far as possible, in every item—as must be done in a large concern—and try to push the thing along to a paying point. I should like to ask the Locomotive Superintendent, through you, if his locomotives are not run as economically, and if the men do not do their work as well, as in any line that he can quote in the world—and that is a big thing to say. If you go over our running, there is a statement of work for the month; you compare that with your first-class lines in any part of the world, and I think you will find that we stand favourably in comparison with the running expenses per mile. The smaller the wheel the greater the speed, we know—or, rather, the greater number of revolutions there must be, and the greater the wear-and-tear. Piston-speed is the thing that kills the locomotive. Thus we run harder, the wheels run quicker per mile, than on other lines; and, consequently, to a certain extent the expenses may be expected to be higher. But I think you will admit that they compare favourably with other parts of the world, which, with all due respect and credit to the officers at the head of departments, proves that their staff endeavour to second their efforts to run the thing economically.

*Mr. McKerrow*: Yes, I know we have an excellent lot of men. We all admit that.

*Mr. Owen*: If you take that into consideration, and take all the points that can be brought to bear, you will earn a name from posterity for yourself. You will find that the general public are with us on this question—that all over New Zealand eight hours a day should be considered a day's work. One member of Parliament even went so far as to say he would make it seven hours before long, but of course that is beside the question.

*Mr. McKerrow*: That is "looking forward."

*Mr. Owen*: We wish to look forward. Of course, platform utterances are not to be taken as genuine: they are catch-votes; but I think eight hours a day ought to be established. The