

n As an old stager in the tramway business I would like, for the benefit of the younger men who seem a little disposed to get foolishly impatient about the slowness over reforms, to contrast the conditions pertaining ~~in~~ to-day under the Melbourne Tramways Board with those when I joined the old M. T. & O. Company more than 40 years ago. Then, and up to 1901, there were neither uniforms nor overcoats. The only scrap of uniform we had was a cap, for which the company charged us 4/6. We were compelled to wear a blue serge jacket at our own expense, and we had to pay 5/ each year for a hackney carriage license, no matter whether we were gripmen or conductors. For £2/10/ a week we had to do 60 hours per week if we were first-class. The first-class men had the pick of the shifts. Then there were second-class men, whose pay was the same but whose work was spread up to and over 16 hours per day. Lastly there were the third-class men, who got just what they could earn through men failing to turn up or through extra trips being run for football matches and so on. When the land boom burst and the banks failed, our wages fell to 32/ a week, and we were practically all casuals, for the rush for work, any sort of work, was so great that large numbers of men turned up each morning at each depot. The result was that those who were first-class men were lucky indeed if they managed to earn even 32/ per week. It was well into the present century before the wage crept up again to £2/10/. There was no annual leave with pay ; indeed, I have heard our former secretary (Mr. T. Jewell, who retired this year) say that he worked for 25 years and never got a single day's leave. There was no provision for having each alternate Sunday off, for the rostered shift extended over 13 days. Each man had to deposit £5 as a

fidelity bond, but on that the company gave us 6 per cent interest. There was no penalty rate for spread of hours, no extra rates for calls-back and calls-forward, no overtime, no extra pay for Sundays, and no free travelling when off duty.

What a change to-day ! Uniforms for winter and summer and overcoats, £4/7/ for a week of 48 hours, 17 days holiday with pay, sick pay, overtime, penalty rates for spread of hours, extra pay for Sundays and public holidays, a weekly guarantee of the full wage even if the work for which we are restored doesn't extend to 48 hours, free medical advice, free diathermic treatment, comfortable mess rooms, endowed beds available for us should we require hospital treatment, our Benefit Society subsidised by the board on a £ for £ basis, and, when we retire, 52 weeks pay presented to us. Our young members should go to Sunday's meeting remembering the old saying, "Soflee walk catchee monkey." We were under this board steadily improving our conditions until the militants gained control of our executive. There was every prospect that by this time we would have got permission to smoke at all termini, have got a concession over shorts and overs, and also over the calls-back and calls-forward, if the executive had not adopted the, to my way of thinking, stupid policy of lampooning the board in every issue of the "Tramway Record." Even our hot heads should be capable of seeing that it is quite hopeless to libel and misrepresent men in public and then approach them privately and ask for favours.