

4. And is there any agreement between the Amalgamated Society and the Government Department that there should be no strike?—No.

5. Now, you have said as General Manager in your report to the Committee, that, so far as the Department is concerned, there would be no objection to the association being recognized. May the Committee infer from that that it is your opinion that if this society of locomotive-engine drivers was recognized by the Government it would not be detrimental to the service?—I think you should put it more clearly. My report says, "subject to the decision of Parliament." The only objection that the management would have is this: There is a disability arising now with regard to the A.S.R.S. as to the interviews and the number of meetings they have. I think about nine members meet quarterly, and their meetings usually extend over a week, and sometimes a fortnight. They then interview myself and sometimes the Minister, and that takes the men from their duties, and it is very inconvenient to the Department. Then, again, they have a biennial Conference at which a larger number of men attend, and that runs into a fortnight or three weeks. That is in a sense inconvenient to the Department, but we have no objection to their meeting biennially. The only trouble is the time the men are away from their duties, and their positions have to be filled by acting-men, who have to be paid. If we are to have quarterly meetings and interviews with the executive, and also the biennial meeting, the time that the men will be taken from their duties will perhaps exceed that at the present time. My idea would be that the executive should work on something like the old lines—that is, when the executive were in Wellington they could conduct all cases by correspondence between the secretary, and then they could interview the management.

6. In your report to the Committee you stated that there would be no objection to the recognition on conditions. Would you mind saying if you have thought out what the conditions would be?—No, I think it is premature to do that. If Parliament decided that the engine-drivers' association must be recognized, then I will prepare conditions, but I have quite enough to do without looking so far ahead.

(No. 3.)

*Mr. A. S. Malcolm, M.P.* : Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I am appearing before the Committee simply because a number of my constituents have placed a number of petitions in my hands for presentation. Some years ago they asked me to represent their case, explained the matter, and I thought made out a very good case for recognition of their union. As a consequence I supported their claims in the House. Last year, in consequence of an amendment I moved, the Minister of Railways promised that he would do his best to secure an arrangement between the two parties, and on the strength of that I withdrew my amendment. Then, following that, the executive of the Amalgamated Society, as I thought, did its very best to secure an arrangement between the two sections by offering to resign in a body, and to allow the locomotive-men to directly appoint two members to the executive, and, that having been done, it seemed to me to prove that the Amalgamated Society was anxious to do all it could to secure uniformity on the lines of representation by the Amalgamated Society. I reported that fact to my constituents who are interested, and expressed the hope that, this generous action having been taken, they would see their way to fall in with it, and that the agitation for a separate union would cease. However, I have now to express their opinion on the matter, and they have advised me that they cannot consider the Amalgamated Society's proposals satisfactory, and that the matter has gone so far now that, over a thousand men being in their union, they could not see their way, even if official recognition were refused, to withdraw from their union. They have advised me, but, of course, I am not in a position to say whether correctly or incorrectly, that in the event of official recognition being refused the locomotive-men who have left would not again return to the Amalgamated Society. I asked them why in the circumstances they should be so very keen in demanding separate recognition, and I pointed out to them the danger of weakening the power of their union by division, but in reply they said that the Amalgamated Society has now reached such a strength as to be actually unwieldy; that the society is so large in numbers that its very strength tends now to defeat the object for which the union was formed—that is, representation and redress of grievances. I asked them then did they claim that the Amalgamated Society would not represent their grievances—did they urge that the Amalgamated Society would deliberately obstruct the redress of their grievances, and they said No, but owing to the overwhelming amount of business that came before the Amalgamated Society it was not so much the representation of grievances as the emphasis that was laid on the grievances, and they said that their most important grievances were simply part and parcel of a huge number of grievances that were brought before the Minister and their grievances were obscured. That is one thing that makes them so anxious to have their own union recognized. When I informed them that they would have direct representation if they all fell in with the Amalgamated Society, they said they were still under this disability: that they would have two members out of an executive of eight, and that though generally the executive would be agreeable to such representations as they wished to make, still in a serious case they would have to carry the other six members with them. In other words, they desired to be allowed without let or hindrance to represent their own case to the Minister. Then, in regard to the point I impressed upon them of division weakening the union, they said that their own union was now such a strong one as to be able to stand on its feet. They said that a union that could claim a membership of a thousand was undoubtedly strong enough to stand on its own, but that they were willing to federate with the Amalgamated Society and that they would be delighted to work as a separate union for the common benefit of the whole service. You will not be interested in knowing my own opinion upon the matter, and I have simply come here this morning at the request of my constituents to represent their views upon the matter in regard to the petition which they have presented through me. However, I should just like to say that I have carried out the pro-