

Committees of this honourable House, but, sir, it seems to me somewhat extraordinary that before what is the highest tribunal in this land counsel has been refused. More particularly, sir, am I surprised when I find that a member of Parliament, in his official capacity as such, and one who, if not directly, is indirectly interested, has seen fit to advocate the cause—

3. *The Chairman.*] I am afraid I shall have to prevent you pursuing your argument on those lines. I have explained that any member of Parliament who presents a petition can come before the Committee and speak in support of that petition. You have the same right, and all the members who presented petitions on your behalf may come here and speak in support of those petitions?—We were unaware of that.

4. It was also explained by Mr Russell that he was not here as an interested party, but as a member who presented petitions?—But had we been aware of that fact we could have had a counter-petition presented by a gentleman who would have acted in the same capacity for us as Mr Russell is acting on behalf of these men. However, I wish, sir that that will be recorded, because I feel keenly, and I wish to enter my protest. Now, sir with regard to what Mr Russell has said in favour of the petitioners—that is, that legislation shall be introduced to enable official recognition to be given to the Engine-drivers, Firemen, and Cleaners' Association—if that is done it means that the legal right which has been held by our society up to the present time shall be limited, and the right to represent the locomotive-men by our society taken away from us. Notwithstanding the fact that it has been stated by our opponents that we have only a very few men in our society, I may tell you, sir, that we have at the present time 764 locomotive-men in our society, and, further than that, I would point out that of the 764 there are no less than 354 enginemen in our society out of 497 available, showing that only 144 experienced enginemen, the men who have been through the mill and know what the Amalgamated Society has done for them, have seen fit to go out of our society. Now, it has been urged that we have not taken advantage of that clause in the Act which gives us the right to obtain an industrial agreement. I would ask our opponents now, sir, if they had the right to go before the Court, would they do so? They know perfectly well they would not, because there is a clause in the Act which says that the Court shall be bound by the schedule to the Classification Act, and the Court therefore is limited, and cannot give an increase higher than the men are receiving, because they are at the present time receiving the maximum. But, sir, if Parliament should see fit to wipe out that clause, I have no doubt that you will have numerous applications to come before the Arbitration Court. Now, a great deal has been made by Mr Russell and other members with regard to the "no-strike" clause, the bogey of the no-strike clause has been raised. Why, sir, it is ridiculous. First of all he also makes a point of the Federation of Labour which is growing, and that if the Amalgamated Society can remain intact there is no knowing what may happen—a great industrial upheaval. He is not cognizant of the fact that in the terms of recognition entered into between the Government and our society affiliation is prohibited—we are not allowed to affiliate. But, sir, if those terms of recognition are broken by the Government themselves, then we are not responsible. If they break faith with us, then we shall have to consider our position, and consider whether, in the interests of our members, we shall not have to take some other steps to strengthen our position. But, sir so long as it remains intact we are prepared to go along as we have gone. Those terms of recognition have been faithfully kept by the General Manager and ourselves during the past sixteen years. Now, we have been accused of looking after the low-paid men to the exclusion of the higher-paid men. I would just like to ask, sir, if any member of this Committee or any member of the Locomotive Association has ever taken the trouble to average the rate of wages per hour received fifteen years ago with the rate of wages per hour received to-day. For the benefit of this Committee, sir I will tell you what they were. The man who received 6s. 6d. a day at that time received 9½d. per hour, to-day he receives 1s. per hour but, owing to the decrease in the hours of the locomotive staff, the amount has risen from 1s. 4d. at that time to 1s. 6¾d. per hour. When that is taken upon an eight-hours basis you will find that the increase on a percentage basis is very much higher than has probably been the case in any other branch of the service. Now, we have been invited by Mr Russell to take as an instance the Government Printing Office, and that it would be ridiculous to say that they should all be in the one society. Why, sir the Government Printing Office men have their respective unions registered under the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, and they can go and get an award and have the rates fixed. If this petition is given effect to, what is to prevent a carpenter, and bricklayer, and blacksmith in the service joining the particular branches of their union which are under the Conciliation Act, and then petitioning Parliament for official recognition? Then, sir, with division comes ultimate subdivision. We have had it in America and Germany and all over the world. Why, sir, take America—there they have division and they have a drivers' association of their own, and in Germany only recently they formed an association of drivers, enginemen, and cleaners, and only a short time ago the drivers said to the cleaners, "You go out, we want an association of our own", with the result that those two bodies of men, although engaged in the same business, are at one another's throats. We have been told that in countries where locomotive associations are in existence they have been of great benefit to the men. Now, sir, Australia has been illustrated, New South Wales has been spoken of as being one of the highest-paid States in Australia. What are the conditions in New South Wales? Let me read to you a report I have, not written by any member of the Amalgamated Society, but written by the secretary of the New South Wales Locomotive Association. It states, 'As far as the internal working of its association is concerned, there is but little to report—a few minor concessions have been secured and thus it has more than held its own. But there are some old standing grievances not yet remedied, the principal of which are weekly computation of time and Sunday time independent of the week's work. These are taken from us in time of depression with a promise of restoration when better times come. Yet, although the railway revenues for several years past show large surpluses, we have been unable to obtain justice in these respects. The remaining