

33. You are not in a position to contradict that statement that there were only three there?—No, I only know what I saw in the *Review*. I am not stressing the point, but I took it—

34. But you are stressing the point that they had gone back?—No. What I understood was that the Masterton resolution was a straw upon the surface as showing the way the tide was running.

35. What right have you to say that this Committee has made a mistake by granting a favourable recommendation to the engine-drivers, firemen, and cleaners?—I hope I have not done anything improper.

36. You said the Committee made a mistake: what grounds have you for saying that—were you here then?—Yes, I was here.

37. What right have you to come to this Committee and say we made a mistake?—

*Mr. Hampton*: Mr. Barnett was asked by somebody a fair question and answered it, and I take it he did so in mistake.

*Mr. Sidey*: He only gave his own opinion.

*The Chairman*: Mr. Dickson is quite in order.

*Witness*: I am sorry if you take it in that way, but when Mr. Sidey asked the question I thought he had a right to ask it, and having asked it I thought I had a right to answer it in a perfectly honest way as far as I could. The common ground for that opinion is that it is the best thing for the Railway servants, the best thing for the Railway Department, and the best thing for this country, that all railway men in the Second Division should be combined in one union with one head to represent its affairs to the Department. I believe that would be the most economical. I believe in the end it would be absolutely the most just method, and for that reason I believe that if all were in one body then no one section of the service would be able to bring any undue pressure upon the Department to gain their ends at the expense of any other section. The one grand thing about the A.S.R.S. is that all sections are equally represented, and all sections present their own deliberations to safeguard the interests of that section. For those reasons I believe it will ultimately be found that one union for the Second Division of the Railway service is the best.

38. And do you think there has been a mistake in forming the Officers' Institute? You said one mistake had been made. Did not the officers at one time belong to the A.S.R.S.?—I have been a long time associated with the A.S.R.S., although I was not actually working with the A.S.R.S. till 1910, but I really cannot say where the Officers' Institute came from.

39. You do not know that the A.S.R.S. used to provide them with brass buttons?—I do not follow your question.

40. It was said that that was about all they ever did for them?—I can state this: that so recently as the beginning of this week I met an officer who belongs to the Officers' Institute, and he told me there was a likelihood of a large section of the Officers' Institute seeking membership with the A.S.R.S. That may be another straw to indicate which way the tide is running.

41. Do all the tradesmen in your workshop belong to the A.S.R.S.?—That I could not say.

42. You could not say that and yet you represent them?—I have represented them for years, but I could not say that. As a matter of fact, I do not happen to see them individually.

43. At this meeting you had in Invercargill at which you carried this resolution how many were present?—That was carried in Dunedin. I have only recently been in Invercargill. The resolution was carried in Dunedin; it was a unanimous meeting of the tradesmen, and all the men unanimously approved of the resolution. If you have any doubt as to my standing with the Dunedin tradesmen, I appeal to the member for Dunedin South, Mr. Sidey, who knows my position.

44. You ought to know how many tradesmen belong to the A.S.R.S. and how many to other unions. You have taken a great interest in this thing for years, and you ought to be able to give us that information?—During all the time I have been connected with them, and during all the elections, I have not had the good luck to strike any opponent, so I have not had the acquaintance of my constituency.

45. Do you consider, then, that 1s. a day is all that is necessary to pay a tradesman over and above a labourer?—I am not sorry you asked that question. I said I was associated with the tradesmen's movement since 1900, and that I was identified with it in close combination with them until 1914. There are men sitting behind you representing those who have signed this petition who know and can produce the book if they will to prove that in all that time I have steadfastly resisted any attempt to make comparisons in the wages of tradesmen with the wages of the men who are not tradesmen. That has been my position the whole time. I have stood for increases for tradesmen, but I have never allowed comparisons, and I have carried men with me right up to the present moment. The tradesmen have never attempted to score off the men under them. We have steadfastly resisted any attempt to draw any comparison between our rates of pay and the rates of pay of the men under us, and I want to say further that everything goes to show that the old distinction between tradesmen and non-tradesmen can never come to pass again—that is to say, that the margin which existed once can never exist again. When I started at the trade thirty-three years ago, the first striker I had could not sign his own name. I am not saying this to the man's disparagement, but I know that that is not the class of man you have nowadays. The non-skilled man was more frequent in those days; but as long as the Department is allowed to use a man's skill up to his limit, they should be allowed to pay him up to his limit.

46. And you think 1s. a day additional is enough to pay a tradesman over and above a labourer?—I want you to say Yes or No?—The thing that we have stood for is this: that no comparison should be made.

47. That does not answer my question: I want to know do you or do you not consider that yourself?—I consider that as long as I have the wages which any private employers are prepared to pay me, I have nothing to do with the man under me. I do not reckon he comes into it at all, and we have steadfastly refused to ever express our views on that point.