

assertions, I will resign to-morrow from the position I hold as president of the Tradesmen's Association. If any proof were needed, sir, of our contention that tradesmen's affairs should be represented by tradesmen, in that section to which they belong, it could not be demonstrated more clearly than by the attitude and display of ignorance that Mr. Hampton shows towards tradesmen and trades other than his own. For instance, Mr. Hampton declared that women could do that special branch of work done by boilermakers—viz., acetoneing. I am not a boilermaker, so cannot do this justice, but I flatter myself I know a little more about this work than Mr. Hampton. I have not seen that illustration, Mr. Hampton, but I am positive that the part of boilermakers' work which women can do must be small work, and repetition work. But does Mr. Hampton, or, for that matter, any one, think seriously that these same women could weld, say, a broken cylinder, cut out boiler crown stays, rebuild the worn-out places in horn cheeks, &c. ? I wish, gentlemen, you could come and see for yourselves, not only the skill that is required, but at times how very dangerous, also injurious, to health is the nature of the work which a boilermaker is called upon to do. I remember, some years ago assisting in welding an engine-frame with this acetone process, and I assure you, gentlemen, I do not envy the boilermaker this job, nor grudge him the extra allowance granted him for it. Mr. Hampton made a point of the fact that women were working in the factories at Home, operating machines. He might have gone further, and reminded you that women have even invaded the professions, and are practising in the legal and medical professions. He might have also stated that there were women blacksmiths, engaged in the chain-making industry, for many years, and he might also have added, that even in New Zealand we have girls engaged in the workshops at brass-finishing. Does he know, however, that the machines, as illustrated, are almost automatic in their action, and that the use of them by comparatively unskilled workers is nothing new. These machines are so made that when properly set they are almost fool proof. They are used on repetition work, and a number of them are under the charge of a skilled artisan. That tradesman looks after the tools, sets them in their place, and adjusts the machine for a certain job. For each tool on the machine a stop arrangement is provided, and when these stops are properly set the operator simply goes through a certain routine and the articles are turned out, one after the other, and each exactly alike. The operator need never worry about the size or shape of them, because the setting of the machine looks after that. When a different article is required the tradesman is again called on and the machine is reset for another job; but it might happen that the same operator was doing the same job for days or even weeks at a time. Another objection raised was that in granting recognition to the tradesmen you would be paving the way for other secessions from the A.S.R.S. Now, our answer to this is that it lies with the A.S.R.S. themselves whether or not there will be need for further secessions. Let them reform from within and set their house in order and so avoid any further ruptures. Gentlemen, we have tried to state our case as clearly and concisely as we are able, and in summing up I wish to reiterate this fact: that we have now no desire whatever to be represented through the A.S.R.S., but humbly seek from you the recommendation we ask for.

(No. 19.)

*Mr. Hampton.*] Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I do not think it at all necessary that I should take up the time of the Committee. You have heard from Mr. McDougall that the crux of the position is that we turned down remit No. 14 dealing with the apprenticeship question, and I am quite prepared to let our case stand or fall on that question. I want to say here that the Committee will have to take this into consideration: that that having been made chief factor in working up this agitation, and being given as the reason why a separate organization should be recognized, if the Committee recommend that the association be granted recognition, these men will take it as expression of opinion from you, gentlemen, that you believe in the principles for which they are contending. I only wish to say that in our action we were guided with what we thought was best for the tradesmen themselves, and we acted honestly and conscientiously in what we did. I think if we do that we have the right to expect the support of Parliament and the country. I think, sir, I might add that I personally know all these gentlemen. I believe they are acting quite conscientiously, but at the same time mistakenly. I give them credit for sincerity of purpose, and I only trust that their abilities and effort will in the future be centred in helping us to assist the Railway service generally. I bear them no animosity whatever, and I trust that whatever happens we will be always the best of friends. I thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for the attention and courtesy we have received from you, and I might say that right throughout we have received the fairest treatment by all concerned.

*Mr. McDougall.*] On behalf of the Tradesmen's Association I also wish to thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee for your attention and courtesy.

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