

5. This presumably refers to the projected New Zealand Railway Tradesmen's Association, and not any of the existing Railway societies at least one of which includes in its membership a considerable number of men following various callings in the service of the Department, and includes skilled as well as unskilled labour.

6. Locomotive-engine drivers, firemen, and cleaners were not granted recognition until a considerable time after the society had been actually formed and its membership totalled at least a thousand persons. The question as to whether the Tradesmen's Society shall be recognized by the Department is a matter of policy. The increase in the number of Railway societies, however, involves a corresponding increase in the number of executives of societies with whom conditions of employment, &c., have to be discussed. It will increase the number of men who have to be relieved, and necessitate the employment of some additional staff to make up the time the members of the executive are necessarily absent from duty attending to business of societies.

In respect to the present petition it is desirable to remind the Committee that on two occasions the workshops staff was, in response to strong representations, given the opportunity of voting on the question of being dealt with by the Arbitration Court and taking Court awards and conditions, or remaining subject to Railway regulations, pay, and conditions. The votes were overwhelmingly in favour of remaining subject to the Railway Regulations. If, as it appears, tradesmen consider arbitration conditions preferable to Railway conditions there is no objection to another vote being taken on the question, but outside conditions cannot be given in addition to all the Railway privileges. The latter will not apply if the men decide to come under the arbitration awards.

I have, &c.,

E. H. HILEY,
General Manager.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

THURSDAY, THE 29TH JUNE, 1916.

JAMES McDUGALL examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You, I understand, wish to make a statement to the Committee in reference to the petition of the New Zealand Railway Tradesmen's Association?—Yes.

2. Where do you reside?—In Petone.

3. What are you?—A fitter; and I have been in the service of the Government for fifteen years. I wish to state that I am president of the Dominion Executive of the New Zealand Railway Tradesmen's Association. I desire to speak on behalf of the petition seeking for recognition for this association. I wish to state that this association was formed for the purpose of advancing and protecting the interests of tradesmen employed in the New Zealand Railway service, and was to be an association working within and through the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. At present the only union to which we tradesmen can belong having official recognition is the A.S.R.S. Dissatisfaction owing to the continued neglect of our interests dates back for a considerable number of years. This dissatisfaction culminated in a movement on our part in the year 1910, when letters were sent to the various workshop centres urging the tradesmen to band themselves together for the purpose of bringing pressure to bear on the executive of the A.S.R.S. to secure for us an increase in wages. The result of circularizing the centres thus was that tradesmen's committees were formed and set up to protect the neglected interests of tradesmen. Let me here tell you, gentlemen, that this movement originated in Dunedin, and also allow me to tell you that the prime mover was Mr. Barnett, who is now on the executive council of the A.S.R.S. The forming of these committees was productive of some good. In November, 1910, a conference of tradesmen's delegates was held in Wellington, and was received by the executive of the A.S.R.S., when a petition to be presented to the General Manager of Railways was placed before them. Might I draw your attention to one point in particular: that not only did we ask the sympathy of their executive towards our petition, but we asked their permission to plead our own cause before the General Manager ourselves. This they granted, and we took it as an acknowledgment that in the past they had not done us justice. The petition I refer to was one asking for an increase in wages. Now, sir, for about ten years prior to this we had not received an increase, so that, to quote from this petition that was presented, "That, excepting an increase of 6d. per day, granted ten years ago, our rate of pay stands at what it was after the 10-per-cent. reduction in the year 1881. . . . That in this respect our case is unique. . . . We are the only class of Railway servants that has not had restored to it the wages then reduced." Here, then, was an opportunity for the A.S.R.S. to show their interest in us by pressing for our well-deserved increase. But, gentlemen, what did they do? In the following year, 1911, the executive council of the A.S.R.S. presented a petition to Parliament asking for a 10-per-cent. increase all round for the Second Division. This attitude on their part annoyed us very much, and a letter was sent to them from Dunedin, which contained the following: "The matter that is giving us concern is the possibility of the