

27. With reference to the ballot that was taken, I understood you to say that 1,166 had voted in favour of hiving off?—Yes.

28. How many voted against you?—A hundred and sixty-one.

29. Did you send a ballot-paper to every tradesman in the service?—As far as we could reach every tradesman in the service we put a ballot-paper into their hands. We did not keep it to the members of our association. We simply asked them if they would fill up the paper and return it to us.

30. Do you think seventeen hundred ballot-papers were sent out?—At that time about two thousand were sent out.

31. You gave the number as seventeen hundred?—That is at the present time. You will understand from various causes that a great number of tradesmen are out of the service to-day who were in it a little over a year ago.

32. Did I understand you to say to Mr. Veitch that there had been a diminution in the number of tradesmen belonging to the A.S.R.S. as a result of dissatisfaction?—There has not been, for this reason: I advised and sent to every branch an intimation that they were not to pull away from the A.S.R.S. until official recognition was granted, and only then if they wanted to do so. I still retain membership in the A.S.R.S.

33. Will you give us the total number of tradesmen in the association?—At the present time there are 1,135 in our own association out of about seventeen hundred.

34. *Mr. Dickson.*] How many of your men have gone to the front?—We have never kept a tally.

35. You told us there were about two thousand papers set out—that is, 630 have not been returned?—They were not returned. We gave them the opportunity.

36. Is it your intention in drawing away from the A.S.R.S. to form a federation with the seamen, waterside workers, and miners?—That is just one of the questions that we fear. I believe that even at the present time the executive of the A.S.R.S. are in conference on that matter, and we fear, as tradesmen, that, being in such a small majority, we will be dragged at the heels of the unskilled man. If anything should happen they will compel us to follow them, and we object to that. That is one of our reasons why we want to be “on our own,” so that we shall not be dragged at the heels of the A.S.R.S. in matters such as you have referred to.

37. You really want to get away from them in order to be responsible for your own members?—That is so.

38. *Mr. Hampton.*] Your chief complaint seems to be in regard to the apprenticeship question, that we would not request the Department to insist that before employing tradesmen in the future they must produce indentures or papers showing they had served an apprenticeship: would you mind telling the Committee the reasons which prompted you in asking us to make that request?—As I said in my evidence, the infringement and encroachment by the unskilled was causing concern to the tradesmen in the service. We thought it was not right that if a tradesman had served his apprenticeship an unskilled man should do his work; and then, again, in several instances we found the practice was creeping in—although I will not say that as far as the officials of the Department are concerned they are aware of it—but the practice was creeping in of unskilled men coming in and working against tradesmen. For instance, take my own particular trade as fitter: it has occurred in that instance. It is a point that the other trades object to, and it was that which prompted us to bring forward remit No. 14 and submit it to our union—the A.S.R.S.—so that it would be brought before the Department in order that they might take reasonable care in the future that nothing like that would occur again.

39. Do you suggest that this was a general thing: in other words, do you suggest that the tradesmen now in the service are not competent men?—I do not suggest any such thing; but I object to any one, say, a street-sweeper, being allowed to come in and do our work.

40. In the engaging of a tradesman who do you consider should be the judge of the qualifications of the tradesmen—the men or the Department?—The men can come to an agreement with the Department if they have a grievance in regard to that. I might say that the Department recognizes that, and it was really only asking them to enforce a regulation of their own to see that such a thing was carried out.

41. You had laid great stress upon that in your circular, and you suggest it is the rock upon which you stand, and I am quite prepared to stand upon it too. Supposing you go to the Department and they say, “Yes, we agree to this.” Very well, they engage a tradesman. He goes into the shop, and you hear that he does not possess any indentures or papers. What are you going to do then?—If the Department agrees to that there will be no need for us to inquire into it. We trust the Department, and if they agree to that we accept and believe that they will see that it is truly carried out before they employ a tradesman.

42. But you suggest it is not carried out now?—By the under-officers.

43. To what extent: is it general or are there a few isolated cases?—In Petone within the last two years I think there were about six different cases.

44. That is to say, you know of six tradesmen in Petone whom the Department look upon as tradesmen and who to your mind are labourers, is that so?—No, they may not be labourers; they might be carpenters, and perhaps working in another Department.

45. You are laying great stress on this point, and I want you to kindly show to the Committee that the necessity existed for the Department’s attention being drawn to this. I want to know who are the labourers now in the service who are drawing tradesmen’s pay?—I am not going to make specific charges of that kind as to who those persons are. I have definitely stated that our concern is not with any men in the service at the present time—it deals with persons who may be employed in the future.