

68. You are not including the man who simply goes round and adjusts the signal—he is a signal labourer?—No, we only take into our association those men who have served an apprenticeship in the particular trade they belong to.

69. You have said that you are quite satisfied with your present conditions so far as the Department are concerned?—We have nothing against the Department at all in this particular petition. Our claim is that if we have any grievances or if there is anything we have objection to that we should have the right of putting it direct before the management, and not to have it censored by the unskilled men.

SAMUEL INGRAM examined. (No. 2.)

1. *The Chairman.* What are you?—I am a boilermaker employed at the Hillside Workshops, and reside at Dunedin. I have been in the Hillside Workshops for six years, and a member of the A.S.R.S. since I joined the service. I have been president of the Otago Branch of the New Zealand Railway Tradesmen's Association for two years, and I am leaving in the course of two or three weeks to join the Expeditionary Forces. I want to say at the outset that the evidence I am going to give has been perused by the members of the branch to which I belong, and therefore it is not only my own personal opinion, but the unanimous opinion of that branch. We desire official recognition for our association for many reasons. Our interests have been greatly neglected and not duly presented to the Railway Department. The A.S.R.S. is composed of members of the Second Division, including guards, truckmen, shunters, horse-drivers, lifters, porters, nightwatchmen, gangers, strikers, nurserymen, fencers, labourers, and suchlike, as well as tradesmen. The great majority, indeed the overwhelming majority, of the A.S.R.S. are not tradesmen, but unskilled labourers of various sorts. The unskilled labourers are paid of necessity, because they do work which is less skilled and which has not required the training and the working for low wages which tradesmen have to undergo while serving their apprenticeship, a slightly lower wage. This has been disapprovingly regarded by those other than tradesmen. To such an extent is this so that whenever a matter arises touching a tradesman at any of the branch meetings of the A.S.R.S. there is a great commotion, and they say, "Oh, there the tradesmen are again." They, so far as their expressions go, seem to think we are out to put them down, whereas the effect of our belonging to the A.S.R.S. is simply that we, and not they, have been kept down. We being in the minority and unskilled labour being greatly in the majority, they are able on all matters to outvote us and block us. Now, many of the matters which most deeply concern tradesmen are matters upon which their interests are not identical with but are in conflict with the interests, or what the unskilled think to be their interests. This conflict, or apparent conflict, is shown particularly in what are called demarcation disputes. These disputes do not arise outside the Railway service, because the Arbitration Court sees that tradesmen's interests are properly protected. A few years ago the labourers were encroaching on the tradesmen's work, and through the agency of the Arbitration Court this was remedied. These disputes do arise in the Railway service because there is no industrial or political force brought to bear upon the Railway Department, and because the A.S.R.S. disregards the interests of tradesmen and not the Department itself causes them. I was indeed surprised at what happened in the Government workshops. There matters which the Arbitration Court would not tolerate for a moment actually occurred. I refer to unskilled men endeavouring to do the work of skilled tradesmen. We object to this matter for many reasons. First, an unskilled man does not appreciate the danger and the risk he is running. He is a source of danger not only to himself, but to those who may be working with him. The second reason why we object to the unskilled men trenching upon skilled work is that they do not do the work so well by any means—the standard of work goes down; and also because a tradesman after his training is able to do it in many cases with an immense saving of time as compared with the time the unskilled man takes, and the general volume of work is reduced, and our wages will suffer because of that. We want to preserve the highest standard of efficiency amongst tradesmen. We want to do the best work and to turn out the best work we possibly can. Now, it will be readily seen that the unskilled men think when we raise these points we are out against them. They are matters which an association composed chiefly of unskilled labourers will not represent to the Department. Outside the service the Arbitration Court would immediately protect tradesmen, because men belonging to a particular trade can go before the Arbitration Court, but in our service we cannot go to any such Court, but have to refer the matter through the medium of the A.S.R.S. The A.S.R.S. represents a majority of those who think that in this regard their interests are different from ours, and we have no chance of representing fairly to the Department, or having represented to the Department, our grievances touching these matters. We are blocked in two ways, for this reason: Before a matter can reach the Department it must go through the branch of the A.S.R.S. where the matter arises. If it gets through the branch before it can reach the Department it must go through the executive council. Now, our grievances can never go past the branch, because the unskilled there can block us. Even if it got through there it might never go through the central executive, because it may be blocked there, as their policy, according to Mr. Wilson, is the greatest good for the greatest number. As a matter of fact it is nearly always blocked in the branch. For example, two years ago, at Hillside, tradesmen were very indignant over lifters doing fitters' work in fitting brasses to the axles of wagon-wheels, and the matter was brought up at the branch meeting. Tradesmen were unanimous, but the matter was promptly thrown out by the unskilled. When I went to the Railway Workshops I had been an officer of the Boilermakers' Union in Dunedin, and had been vice-president for one year and president for one year. I saw them doing work there and things tolerated there which