

chairman had placed on the conference sheet in the direct interests of tradesmen. Conference refused to hear me. They were within their constitutional rights in refusing to hear me, but the constitution of the society would not have been greatly strained if they had given me a chance, considering the special circumstances of the case. Another instance that occurred at that time in respect to the same items shows the true policy of the A.S.R.S. towards the direct interests of tradesmen. While visiting conference, which I was fully entitled to do as a member of the society, I heard part of the discussion on the items which my branch had sent, and which made certain comparisons with regard to the pay of tradesmen and the pay of others who were not tradesmen. I heard a delegate say that "Comparisons are odious," which is the same as saying that members of the A.S.R.S. should not make comparisons with regard to the pay for different classes of work. To say that "comparisons are odious" in such cases showed a want of knowledge on the part of the delegate as to how wages should be regulated in engineering-shops between engineering tradesmen and their helpers. By comparisons, Mr. Chairman, in my opinion, is the only fair way to regulate wages between engineering tradesmen and their assistants. The items were rejected by conference, which again shows what little hope tradesmen had at that time of getting what they knew to be justice from the A.S.R.S. conference. Another little event which occurred at that time shows the treatment that tradesmen may expect who endeavour to deal with matters which do justice to tradesmen through the A.S.R.S. At the time of which I speak certain workmen not tradesmen subjected certain tradesmen to quite a mild persecution because they supported items which made comparisons between the work and wages of tradesmen and the work and wages of those who are not tradesmen. Such treatment any tradesman may expect when he attempts to deal with matters in the direct interest of tradesmen, especially as regards wages, again showing what little prospect tradesmen have of receiving justice from the A.S.R.S. Tradesmen cannot get vitally important items passed conference. Their interests are therefore not fully placed before the General Manager. We are therefore now asking the right to place our interests before the General Manager through our own society. There is a tendency on the part of men who are not tradesmen to consider that the tradesmen's wages should be the lowest living-wage, and that all should receive the same as tradesmen. The cost-of-living argument is always being used by them to cut down any difference that exists between their pay and the tradesmen's pay, and they—the bulk of the members who are not tradesmen—completely ignore the just claims of skill, responsibility, and application necessary to produce successful tradesmen's work. This, in my opinion, is the mistake of the A.S.R.S., and has been the mistake for several years past. Then, you might ask, could internal reorganization of the A.S.R.S. be of any benefit? Any conference, however elected, could reject tradesmen's proposals. Direct representation is useless. That obtains now partly, both on the A.S.R.S. conference and executive. I have been direct representative on the executive as vice-president, and I know its futility. Tradesmen as such are practically in a tomb in the A.S.R.S., and might remain there unless our petition is granted. The tradesmen's direct representative must always feel the hopelessness of advocating on the A.S.R.S. executive the special treatment that the special work of tradesmen deserves. It is safe to say that any candidate for conference who advocated a higher proportion in wages than obtains at present for tradesmen would not be elected by the branches. Forming tradesmen in certain districts into a branch consisting of tradesmen only, and thus forming several branches throughout the Dominion consisting of tradesmen only, with tradesmen for delegates to conference, and the executive would prove useless, because they would be swamped at conference, both as regards numbers and the opinions that would be held by delegates elected by branches consisting of men who are not tradesmen, to the effect that "tradesmen must be content to accept what we (the majority who are not tradesmen) give them, both as regards wages and protection to their craft." The tradesmen's remits of vital importance to tradesmen would not under those circumstances reach the General Manager, and the remits that were sent to the General Manager would be accompanied by the statement that these remits were supported by the whole of the members of the A.S.R.S., which is sometimes not quite true. But, as I have said already, tradesmen are in a tomb in the A.S.R.S., and must often remain silent while they know very well that they are being undone by their true interests being evaded. This phase of the matter was well put by Mr. Samuel Kennedy, of the Engine-drivers' Society, in the report of the Railways Committee of 1910, bottom of page 24, where he says, "It is a well-known fact amongst leaders of trades-unions that the members of an amalgamated society drawing the higher pay can be of great assistance in lifting the lower-paid men up, but when it comes to getting higher pay for themselves they are in a minority." This paragraph from Mr. Kennedy's address seems to me to be applicable to the A.S.R.S. just now. There is not sufficient willingness on the part of men who are not tradesmen to do justice to the responsibility, skill, special knowledge, and application necessary to produce successful tradesmen's work. In my opinion the tradesmen who are most likely to be elected to the A.S.R.S. conference, under its present constitution, are those who sacrifice justice to themselves and to their fellow-craftsmen in the way of (a) adequate difference between skilled and unskilled labour; (b) insufficient remuneration for responsibility; and (c) protection for tradesmen. So that during elections for conference tradesmen's requirements just mentioned are never advocated by even tradesmen who are candidates amongst the members of the various branches, and consequently are never advocated by the delegate at conference, even though the delegate might be a tradesman, because conference must in the main confine its discussions to the remits sent forward by the various branches. But a tradesman might not be elected at all, though we have been fortunate in getting tradesmen on, I believe, every conference and executive. It is easily seen, therefore, that the interests of tradesmen are never fully represented to the General Manager by either the A.S.R.S. conference or executive, or even by the general secretary, because none of these three parts of