

the governing body get the interests of tradesmen fully represented to it. The various matters connected with tradesmen are likely to be better looked after by tradesmen than by those who are not tradesmen; and the interests of the Department and the general public should be safe in the hands of tradesmen where the affairs of tradesmen are concerned. I ask this Committee to grant the prayer of the petitioners and give the tradesmen the chance to look after their own interests by placing them in the position of being able to represent their interests directly to the General Manager from their own union. The A.S.R.S. has done good work for many in the past, and if the tradesmen pass out of it it will still be able to do good work, since it will still have a large membership and important interests to look after. We wish no injury to the A.S.R.S., but can freely wish it success in all things that are fair and just to all concerned.

2. *Mr. Sibley.*] I understand that one of the reasons for your petition is that the A.S.R.S. have not made adequate representations to the Department in favour of an increase in wages for tradesmen, amongst other things?—Well, in part, but that has nothing to do with the position at the present time. Of course, it all helps in a series of years to cause dissatisfaction.

3. From what you said in regard to the wages question I understood you considered that the A.S.R.S. had not taken proper steps to put your claims before the Department?—That is partly true and partly not true. The great difficulty we have is not having proper means of bringing our claims direct before the General Manager.

4. And that you have suffered in the past because of that?—Yes, partly.

5. I want to know how you have suffered. Your petition says, "The society has absolutely refused to represent questions touching the remuneration, protection, and conditions of the skilled labour of tradesmen." So that, partly because of the fact that the society has not adequately put your case before the Department, you have suffered to some extent?—Yes, we have suffered.

6. Does that not mean that if you have suffered you are not receiving adequate wages to-day?—It might mean that. It could be construed to that. The proper answer to that is Yes-No, because it is mixed up. We all know you are trenching on ground now that is the result of a series of years. I repeat again that it is not a question of wages or what we have suffered. I say without hesitation that what we want is to represent our case to the management whether we may be considered to have had justice in the past or not, and that there will be nobody to prevent us meeting the Minister and the Manager and putting our requests directly before them irrespective of what we have suffered.

7. I understand you do not wish that the past treatment that has been meted out to you should be taken into consideration as a cause for what you are asking to be done now?—Past treatment by whom—by the society or the Department?

8. You do not wish the disadvantages you have suffered through the A.S.R.S. to be taken into consideration?—We have had very great difficulty in getting our requests adequately represented through the A.S.R.S.

9. And because of that you have suffered?—Yes, we have suffered.

10. I understand you do not want your present position to be taken into account as a reason why you should be entitled in future to have representation or not?—Yes, in regard to the difficulty of fully representing our grievances through the A.S.R.S., and we want you to take the constitutional question into account explicitly; that is one of the main difficulties. We want the privilege of going direct to the Minister and the General Manager without any one intervening.

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DENIS ROWLES examined. (No. 4.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A fitter employed in the Newmarket Workshops at Auckland.

2. I understand you wish to make a statement to the Committee?—Yes. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I am president of the Auckland Branch of the New Zealand Railway Tradesmen's Association. I spent my annual leave for two years in going round the country and coming in contact with the tradesmen in the different centres, so I can speak as to the personal opinions of the other tradesmen whom I met. From one end of New Zealand to the other I find that the feeling among the tradesmen was almost unanimously in favour of a separate organization. I wish to assure you, gentlemen, that this is not a movement engineered by a few irresponsible persons, but is the logical outcome of years of dissatisfaction among the mechanics of the service on account of the treatment they have received at the hands of the A.S.R.S. You have been told that we took a ballot among the tradesmen of the service in order that they could express their own free opinions as to whether they wanted this organization or not. You have been told of the overwhelming majority who voted in favour of it, and since that time, gentlemen, there has been no hesitation as to what course we should pursue. There has been no looking back, because less than three months ago, when I went round the different centres of New Zealand in company with Mr. McDougall, the president of the executive council, we found the feeling of tradesmen in the centres was keener than ever, and they were anxious to know when we could expect to get recognition given to our society. Now, one of the principal objects we had in the formation of the society was to raise up the standard of tradesmanship in the service, and it was with that object in view that we submitted that particular remit No. 14 which you have heard discussed this morning—that is, that no tradesman may in future be employed by the Department who has not served his time. Our idea was not to inflict a hardship on any man, but to uplift the standard of tradesmanship in the service. Whether they knew the effect of this remit or not, the A.S.R.S. struck a vital blow at the apprenticeship system, and that is the