

14. Was it not the original understanding that when any trade obtained an award the permits granted should be confined to members of that trade?—No; any worker who considered himself incapable of earning the minimum wage paid in the trade, and not being a member of the trade, could make application for a permit to work for an under-rate. We had no opposition to offer in the case I have mentioned. Permits are granted for six months, should the time have expired. If the secretary fails to give a permit within twenty-four hours the applicant can apply to the Stipendiary Magistrate.

15. *Mr. Bollard.*] Do you suggest that a large number of men who receive permits obtain them improperly?—They have to make formal application certainly, but they can get permits if there is no opposition. We maintain it is not for any other tradesmen to come into our ranks and take the work away from us, thus debarring competent men—whether members of our union or not—from getting employment. There are employers who tender to do work by employing men at the standard rate of wages, while others who are tendering against them pay a lower rate of wages to underpaid men, whom they employ in preference to the fully paid competent men. We appeal to the Committee that this is not fair to those employers who are trying to observe the award, and to carry out the works in accordance with the plans and specifications.

16. As a matter of fair-play, you consider that a number of these permits are obtained improperly?—That is so.

17. And you think the law should be altered?—That is what the members of my union and members of our trade outside of it desire.

18. You do not object to a man who is incapacitated, and therefore not able to earn the minimum wage, obtaining a permit?—We have no objection whatever to the applicant in that case.

19. *Mr. Arnold.*] In those districts where you have no representation, in the case of the aged members of your society, how is it possible for the Magistrate or local constable to fix a fair wage in a trade of which they have no knowledge?—As far as members of our society is concerned, we have had no applications; but any old member of the trade, whether a member of the union or otherwise, can get a permit, and the wages are determined by the Magistrate or Chairman of the Conciliation Board, or the secretary of the union. If an applicant asked for 5s. a day, the Magistrate on the evidence would grant it.

20. But there is no other evidence except that of the applicant, because in country places you have no representation?—That is so; we have no jurisdiction in many country districts.

21. Does this system work well in the cities?—We have no permits issued in the cities other than those to aged members of the trade.

22. Take Dunedin: you said a large number had been granted by the Chairman of the Conciliation Board?—I am referring now to Wellington and Auckland, where we have secretaries allotted to us.

23. In the cities has the system of granting permits by the Chairman of the Conciliation Board been a satisfactory one?—I think so, because he notifies the secretary that So-and-so has applied for a permit, and the secretary has a chance of being heard, and if the evidence is sufficient in favour of the applicant the permit is granted. In Wellington, if the applicant is a young fellow, we endeavour to have him indentured for the remainder of his time, so as to throw the onus on the employer of teaching him the trade, thereby minimising the number of incompetents. Under this permit system our trade is becoming demoralised, and we wish to have better tradesmen in order to turn out better work, and, if possible, to remove the slur so often cast by many employers on the members of the trade, and also on members of my society, that so many carpenters and joiners of to-day are not worth the minimum wage. We are of the opinion that if the system of granting permits were abolished, or amended in some effective manner, we should then have more efficient tradesmen as a result. The permit system is only encouraging the system of turning out inferior tradesmen, for the simple reason that men never have a chance to learn the trade in all its branches.

24. When an application for a permit comes before the Chairman of the Board, who represents your society?—The secretary.

25. Do you think that system is better than to have a committee set up for that purpose?—We have never gone into that proposal. It is left entirely to the secretary to deal with the permits.

26. If a young fellow twenty-five years of age applies for a permit, do you suggest that he should be made an apprentice?—Provided he has served a certain amount of time at the trade; but I do not think he should start to learn the trade at that age.

27. But suppose he has some knowledge of it?—Yes, in that case let him be indentured for the remainder of his term—say, two or three years, according to the length of time of service. Many raise an objection to the wages they receive if they are bound for a term, but there is nothing in the Act to say they should not receive more—say, at the same rate as obtained by permit.

28. Outside of the young fellow who has had a certain amount of experience at the trade, and the old men, you would do away with the permit system?—Yes, outside of those people.

29. *Hon. Mr. Millar.*] Can you tell me whether the permits of which you read a list were issued to separate men, or include reissues to the same men?—No. We asked the Government to give us the returns for the years mentioned.

30. It is quite possible that when the term is expired the holder has received notice from the secretary and has applied again, and had another permit issued: does the list include cases where two or more permits have been issued to the same person, or simply the number of individuals to whom the permits have been issued?—That I could not say. The list is given of permits issued to individuals, but I dare say after the six months have expired the permits may have in some instances been continued; but we are confronted with the difficulty of giving the holder of a permit