

It has taken twenty years of hard work and self-sacrifice on the part of a large number of railway-men to build our union up to its present standard of efficiency, and anything likely to endanger its stability is a very serious matter to the members of your Department; and I appeal to your well-known sympathy for trades-unionism not to take any action in this matter till the facts have been fully tested and the necessity for a separate locomotive union proved.

“I have, &c.,

“Hon. J. A. Millar, Minister of Railways.”

“W. A. VEITCH.

That is the way we look at it. We know these locomotive-men have grievances, but the forming of another union will not remedy them. If you grant separate recognition you have not got over the difficulty. The only way to promote satisfaction amongst these men is to redress their grievances, and I hope you will see your way to do that at the earliest possible moment. Sectionalism in other countries has not operated to the benefit of the men concerned. I am quite convinced that that is so. I should like to read to you a statement which was made by Mr. F. Barlow, President of the Firemen and Engineers' Association in Queensland. These are the words he uses: “At Bullock Island, where the shunters were reduced in position and lost 1s. per day, the Locomotive Association realised that unless unionists co-operate the infringements at Newcastle and Bullock Island will extend to other members of the staff. Grievances will increase unless we unite and work together.” In New Zealand we are united, and I sincerely hope we shall be able to continue working together. The President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, Mr. Carter, in America, has made this statement: “Many are the bitter lessons which have been taught as to how essential is federation to the complete success of the various brotherhoods in carrying out the objects for which they are organized.” We have been told that the Amalgamated Society has outgrown its usefulness. I assert that the Amalgamated Society was not of much use to the railwaymen until it grew to be a great organization. An argument Mr. Brown used was to the effect that when he joined the service he started at 5s. 6d., and that now cleaners start at only 5s. I will trace the history of the position, and show you clearly that Mr. Brown's argument does not uphold his case. In its early history our union was weak. It was not properly recognised. It had to fight against the prejudice of certain officials which we have not to fight against now. A reduction was made in the wages of juniors, and the cleaners had to share in that reduction, from 5s. 6d. to 3s. 6d. At that time our union was not strong enough to prevent this, but since then the Amalgamated Society has gathered strength and has brought the cleaners' minimum wages up from 3s. 6d. to 5s., and before long we hope to see them where they were before. I think that is a complete reply to Mr. Brown's argument with respect to the cleaners' wages. I claim that the locomotive-men's grievances have been pushed forward with a considerable amount of success by the Amalgamated Society. No reasonable man will admit that the progress made in years past is going to stop to-day. We have had bad times in New Zealand, but eventually they will pass away, and I feel sure that in the near future the finances of the country will justify the Minister in granting further increases and improved working-conditions to the railwaymen. Parliament has treated us very well indeed from time to time in granting increases and improved working-conditions, and it must be admitted that the railwaymen are much better off to-day than they were twenty years ago, especially with regard to hours of labour; but the fact remains that there are still other improvements which are urgently needed. I feel sure that we shall still retain the sympathy of members of Parliament, and that these gentlemen will be prepared when the proper time comes to grant further concessions. With regard to the locomotive-men being thoroughly dissatisfied with the A.S.R.S., I doubt that statement very much. It is a fact that a very great effort has been made by this new association to get locomotive-men to resign from the A.S.R.S.; but, as far as I can learn, not a very large number of men have resigned. The fact that a number of the men who have joined the new association still retain their membership with the A.S.R.S. shows that they still feel that the A.S.R.S. is a very useful instrument for the redress of their grievances, and a very useful protection against injustice. I think I am justified in claiming that it is the duty of those who are asking for a change to prove the necessity for that change. The necessity for this new union has not been proved. I think I am justified in urging on this Committee to take that view of the matter. These gentlemen have made a very good stand this morning, and done the very best they could for what they believe to be right, but I contend they failed to prove to you that a necessity for a new union exists.

Mr. W. A. VEITCH, President, Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, re-examined. (No. 7.)

*The Chairman:* Have you anything further to say, Mr. Veitch?

*Witness:* Sir, my reply will be very brief indeed. With regard to the Appeal Board I will not say anything, simply because I am entitled to be the guardian of my own honour in that matter. But there is one thing I must mention: Some remarks were made about the general secretary being a paid secretary, and that he had issued a certain circular to the branches. I wish to say this: that the circular referred to was issued by the general secretary under my direction. I instructed him to issue that circular. This association claim that they are trying to assist the A.S.R.S.: the assistance they propose to give us is that they will, if recognised, draw from our numbers over a thousand men. The necessity for the new union has not been proved, and I respectfully ask the Committee to give a decision to that effect.