

wish to emphasize that before this Committee to-day The Locomotive-engine Drivers, Firemen, and Cleaners' Association have in their constitution a clause which provides that there shall be no strike. The Amalgamated Society possesses no such clause apart from the law which is in the Arbitration and Conciliation Act penalizing those persons who should go out on strike in connection with the railways. If we had such a thing as is proposed by certain people in New Zealand—namely, a federation of labour—and I would point out to the Committee that that is being strongly urged at the present time—a union welding the whole of the labour classes into one—if such a union declared that labour shall strike, you might have your railways stopped except that the locomotive-men, who are the heart and soul of the Railway service, would, according to their constitution, refuse to participate in anything that would stop the traffic in this country. Which of the societies is worthy of recognition, the one that has as the foundation of its constitution “No strike” or the society that holds itself free to strike if occasion arose? It is not proper to suggest that the Minister should give evidence before an inquiry of this kind, but the Hon. the Minister not long ago visited Australia, and while there he came in contact with large bodies of men representing the Locomotive-engine Drivers, Firemen, and Cleaners' Unions there. He saw the Managers, the Commissioners of Railways in all the different States, and he thus had an opportunity—he being himself a labour-man, and having risen from the ranks—of hearing the views of both classes. On the one hand he heard the views of the locomotive-men, and on the other hand, as Minister of Railways, he had the opportunity of discussing the question from the point of view of the control and management with the Commissioners. I understand that since the Hon. Mr. Millar returned he has stated that he is prepared to recommend Cabinet that official recognition should be granted to the Engine-drivers, Firemen, and Cleaners' Association. That being the case, I think that my work this morning is of a very subsidiary character. I have only now to deal with one point, and that is with regard to the report of the Committee last year, that by the internal reorganization of the society the petitioners could always get direct representation on the executive of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. Now, sir, I am quite prepared to admit that some of the members of the Locomotive-engine Drivers, Firemen, and Cleaners' Union were upon the executive of the Amalgamated Society. We have two or three gentlemen here this morning who belong to the Amalgamated Society, and who have occupied high positions in connection with the society, and who are themselves engine-drivers, but I say, so far as those gentlemen are concerned, they represent a very small minority of the engine-drivers, firemen, and cleaners. Another thing I wish to say is that the efforts that have been made during the year by the Amalgamated Society have not led to success. They had in their minds a scheme for getting direct representation of a particular class of the service upon the executive of that body, but, unfortunately, the time has gone past, in my opinion, when such a proposal is practicable. The feeling of the locomotive-drivers now is that nothing is open to them but to have their own society recognized, and then federate with the Amalgamated Society if such is thought desirable and agreed to. Now, it has been said time after time that if recognition were given to the locomotive-engine drivers, firemen, and cleaners, the probability is that other sections of the service would break off. Well, the position is this—that the officers have their own union already, and they are making it a very active union at the present time. Whether the guards and other men of that class would be likely to break off is a matter that I am not competent to express an opinion upon, but my own opinion is that they would not. The fact is that the locomotive-men represent so clearly a distinct branch of the service that it seems to me to be quite natural that that branch should have a union of their own to be able to represent the technicalities of their service. Take a case like the Government Printing Office. That is as much a State service as the railways, and it would be simply absurd if an attempt was made to squeeze the bookbinders, stereotypers, linotypists, machinists, and all the other branches of the Government Printing Office into one union. Such an idea would be absurd, and if a proposal was made to that effect it would result in the splitting-up of that union into several sections and then federating for the purpose of one common good. What I ask the Committee to do is to recommend to Parliament that there should be power to allow the locomotive-men to register side by side with the Amalgamated Society, and then when any questions arose for the common good those two associations could stand together to represent matters to the Minister from the proper point of view, leaving each separate branch of the society to deal with those matters with which it was most cognizant and which referred to its particular branch of the service. I can only say that, for myself, I am a printer. If I am dealing with my staff, or any other staff, and a man comes to me representing the linotype machinists, I know exactly what I am dealing with, and it would be absurd to expect the bookbinders to come to me in connection with the linotype operators or machinists. I would like to say that we live in an age when industrial unionism is recognized. These men have formed their union. They cannot register under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, but they have registered under the one Act that is available—that is, the Trades-union Act. They have a strong society with branches everywhere. I do not know that it is necessary for me to say any more, but I would like, with the permission of the Committee, to ask Mr. Ronayne two or three questions.

THOMAS RONAYNE examined. (No. 2.)

- 1 *Mr. Russell.*] You are General Manager of the New Zealand Railways?—Yes.
2. Speaking as General Manager has there ever been any industrial agreement made between the Government and the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants?—No registered agreement. The agreement is simply by memorandum.
- 3 Is that the memorandum that was signed and upon which a ballot was taken by the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants at the time when the Amalgamated Society was received back by the Government after the strike?—Yes.