

Australia are not so highly paid as in New Zealand. This agitation is in the interest of the first-grade driver. We have had agitations all along for Australian conditions, and if you compare all the Australian States you will find that the firemen there are very badly paid, but in some of the States the drivers get more pay as compared with the New Zealand drivers, but taking the drivers all through they too are very badly paid indeed. If the locomotive association got the Australian conditions they agitated for, no doubt one effect would be to reduce the lower-paid men not only in the other branches of our service, but also the lower-paid men in the locomotive service, and nobody would gain anything by that except the first-grade drivers, and I, for one, am not going to push forward the interests of a few men to the detriment of a large body of men. While I am prepared to admit that the driver of a passenger-train has a great responsibility, still I say this: that there is hardly one man in the service who is paid for the responsibility he has. It is quite different from financial responsibility and you will agree with me that the whole of the service is poorly paid from the General Manager down. Then why should we not stick together and help to improve our conditions in a proper way, instead of fighting each other, as we are doing at the present time. It would have pleased me much better to have appeared before you as representative of the whole of the service, bringing before you some grievances. I am sure that would be better for the whole service instead of bickering over disputes between ourselves, because after all it is only a question of how we should fight. Mr Kennedy and others said we are opposed to the direct departmental-representation system, and he is quite correct. I have always opposed that system, and Mr Wilson is in the same position. Does not that fact alone prove that we have tried to compromise with them? And that is what we are trying to prove to you now. We have done our best to meet them; we have sunk our individual opinions, and we think this individual-representation system is not the best one. The arguments about the technicalities of the Locomotive Department not being understood by them is a myth. The General Manager of Railways has scarcely had a case from the A.S.R.S. in which the technicalities of locomotive work have come into the question at all—it is purely a matter of the service conditions and regulations. We find that the technicalities of the locomotive work do not come in to any great extent in discussing locomotive grievances with the management. When they do we have locomotive-men who are capable of dealing with them. My own opinion is that it would be better if we had no direct representation. We are anxious to meet these men and come to a compromise. As I said, we have given way; we have done what in our opinion would be better left undone in the hope that by giving way part of the principle we should avoid losing the whole. That is our object, and I appeal to this Committee and to them to try and take that view of the matter, and realize that when there is a dispute between two parties either side must give way a little before it is possible to come to a settlement. Then, and not till then, shall we be able to go on with the work of getting back what was taken from us during the retrenchment, and of working to improve the conditions of the railwaymen in New Zealand. Now, Mr Russell has made a good deal of the statement in the General Manager's report that, so far as the Railway Department is concerned, they have no objection to the recognition of the union. That is purely a non-committal statement. The General Manager simply means by that that he is prepared to abide by the decision of Parliament, and to do his best according to any system that Parliament may decide upon. That is really what it amounts to, but it does not mean at all, and does not intend to convey, the idea that the General Manager is favourable to the recognition of this separate union.

*Mr Russell:* He is not against it.

*Mr Veitch:* I am sorry my time is so limited, because there is so much I wish to refer to. I can only conclude, Mr Chairman, by saying that I reciprocate the good feeling expressed by these men towards me personally, and I hope, whatever the decision of this Committee may be, that we shall be able to come to an arrangement that will settle this very unwise and expensive fight that is going on. There is no doubt about it in my own mind that we should come to some arrangement. I am ready to meet them this afternoon, and discuss the position with them with the idea of coming to some settlement. I did my best to prevent this matter being fought out in the political arena—it is not fair to members of the Committee and not fair to ourselves that we should be here fighting over our internal differences at all. I am sure, if we met in a generous spirit and discussed the position amongst ourselves, that the men fighting on each side could come to a settlement. I sincerely hope that in the interests of the railwaymen of New Zealand you will retain the Amalgamated Society intact, because I claim that it is the only protection the railwaymen have. We are very anxious indeed to do our duty and to keep our men together, in order that the society may not go back. I am sure that since the fight has started our service conditions have gone back, and before that we did nothing but make improvements. What, then, would be the position if we permanently divide? I maintain that the railwaymen in New Zealand would have to pay very dearly for it indeed.

MATTHEW JOSEPH MACK examined. (No. 10)

1 *The Chairman.*] What are you?—Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants.

2 Will you make a statement to the Committee in regard to the petition presented by your society?—Sir, I am somewhat at a loss upon this occasion, for the simple reason that I fully expected at the outset that we should have been supplied with some fresh evidence in support of the petition presented by the Locomotive-engine Drivers' Association; but I find, sir, upon listening to the evidence that has already been given, that there is nothing of an important nature further than that which was previously presented to your Committee. I am somewhat unaccustomed to, and do not know, the rules of parliamentary procedure, and more particularly with regard to the