

said that it would be weakening the society both politically and otherwise. (See *Hansard* No. 20, 1909, p. 1047.) We have been twitted with the fact that we have still work enough left to enrol another five thousand members. I may tell you, sir, that to-day our society has more than the permanent staff of the Second Division, between 5s. and 12s. 6d. a day, in our ranks. We have actually more of the permanent staff in our ranks than what is claimed, and that is upon the figures of Mr. Millar himself, according to *Hansard* No. 12, page 325, 1910. I think I have said sufficient to satisfy any reasonable man that the locomotive associations in other countries have not been efficient, and I can assure you that, if the prayer of this petition is granted, the trouble, instead of ending, will be just about commencing. I thank you, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, for the patient hearing you have given me.

*The Chairman* I wish to point out at this stage that there will be nothing to prevent any member of Parliament coming along and speaking on behalf of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. Of course, there will not be time to-day, but a member can come along at any time and get his evidence taken down.

*Witness* I am not objecting to Mr. Russell giving evidence. What I am objecting to is Mr. Russell acting as an advocate. I venture to say that we could have produced a man from our own ranks who could have acted as an advocate quite apart from legal counsel.

*Mr. Russell* I am here as a member of Parliament in charge of a petition, and not as an advocate.

*Witness* We understood that we should be confined to the order of reference as supplied to us.

*The Chairman:* We are not listening to any objection to your presence, Mr. Russell; you are here as a member of the House, and the Committee places that construction on your presence.

WILLIAM THOMAS WILSON examined. (No. 11.)

1 *The Chairman.*] What are you?—An engine-driver

2 Will you make a statement to the Committee in regard to the petition from the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants?—I should like to say, Mr. Chairman, that in connection with this matter so much ground has been covered that there are very few new points in connection with the subject-matter that I can touch upon. However, there are one or two references which have been made by the gentlemen who have spoken in support of the petition from the Engine-drivers and Firemen's Association that I cannot allow to pass without making some reference to. I may say at the outset, Mr. Chairman, that I am one who holds this opinion: that, although steadfastly opposed to the idea of a new organization such as is proposed by the petitioners, I am one who, although I possess and claim the right of an opinion of my own, and a perfect right to express that opinion, wants the same respect given to me for the opinion I hold that I am prepared to concede to other people. I am opposing this petition to-day, Mr. Chairman, because I honestly and conscientiously believe it not to be in the best interests of the railway servants as a whole, and diametrically opposed to that particular department from which the membership of this organization has emanated. I want to make myself perfectly clear on that point. Now, during the discussion this morning it was openly stated that one of the reasons why this new association had been formed was because the men concerned were dissatisfied with the methods that had been adopted, and that the people who were dissatisfied were the people who were in the best position to judge as to whether their interests had been well looked after or not. Those perhaps are not the exact words that were used, but words were given vent to this morning to that effect. I prefer not to mention names, it perhaps causes a little feeling where feeling can be avoided, but words to that effect were used. I am going to take on myself the rôle of an authority. I simply say that I claim here conscientiously that I am in the position of a judge as to whether due consideration has been given to the grievances of the men in the Locomotive Department or whether they have not, and in support of my contention I will say this: that I have attended, commencing at the 1894 Conference and concluding with the 1910 Conference—with the exception of one of those Conferences I have attended every one. I say this: that I am in a far better position to judge as to whether those men have received due consideration in connection with the requests that have been put forward, and to which the utmost importance has been attached by the men who were not there at all. I claim that without any egotism, and what I have said is a fact. It has been stated also during the discussion this morning that, owing to the vast number of lower-paid men as compared with the drivers, a feeling has crept up in the direction of preventing the drivers getting an increase of pay, for the sole purpose of endeavouring to increase the pay of the lower-paid men. Now, I am prepared to admit this: that in the conduct of the business of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants this practice has been adopted, that there has been a certain amount of give and take. We have laid our heads together at times when we have been in the position that we felt sure that we could get one of a number of requests we put forward, or, say, two of a number, and decided that it was preferable to obtain the greatest good for the greatest number. And, as far as that is concerned, the locomotive-men's interests have not been neglected, and the statement that was made here this morning to the effect that it was because of the lower-paid men that they were not getting fair play is totally opposed to fact. I wish also to say that in all my experience at the Conferences, and as a member of the executive council for a number of years, also as representative at deputations numbering something like fifty or sixty to the Minister and General Manager, I have never seen an instance of selfishness which would support the contention that separate representation should be given to the engine-drivers. I simply mention this fact because I feel in duty bound to do so. I have seen a total absence of selfishness. It will be admitted that the locomotive-men have made some headway, and, speaking after twenty-eight years' experience, I would ask this question: Whether any individual members of the Locomotive Department are prepared to go back to the conditions