

reserve the right to take action if they thought fit if the recommendation was given that another association should have official recognition?—It is very easy of explanation. If every section that comes along is to get recognition, then the compact which we regarded as a solid compact, and one which should be treated as such by the Government, will be broken, and once a compact is broken in connection with any matter either party is at liberty to do just as it thinks fit. They are under no further obligation.

16. The *Railway Review* is your official organ?—Yes.

17. And it represents the views, I presume, of the executive of the A.S.R.S.?—I do not know that. I am not prepared to say that. The editor, I may say, is under an agreement which lays down how far he can go or cannot go. The executive do not influence him in any way whatever. Whatever he writes in the *Railway Review* he does entirely "off his own bat," and he is to be responsible to members for it.

18. Then do you agree with an article in the *Review* headed "The Wage Crisis," wherein it says, "The waterside workers, as a large and well-organized body of transport employees, are approaching the executive council with a proposal to link up for effective corporation for mutual benefit. The possibilities are immense, and with a strongly dissatisfied body of State servants they would be sinister"?—I quite agree with that—every word of it—because I know this: that the saneness of the executive of the A.S.R.S. not only would have but has had an influence upon the waterside workers which, when the result is known, will be approved of by every man in this country.

Mr. Hampton: Seeing that the paper has been quoted from and only part of the article has been read, might I ask that the *Review* be put in in order that members of the Committee may read the whole of the article?

The Chairman: Yes.

Mr. McDougall: I will read the whole of the article for the information of the members of the Committee. It reads:—

THE WAGE CRISIS.

A definite development in favour of railway men's demands for consideration during this time of exceptional high prices has taken place since last month. The National Cabinet has promised a concession, and will evidently give a lead to Parliament as to the extent of the rise, which will operate retrospectively from 1st April. This is good as far as it goes, but unless the concession adequately meets the serious crisis which has arisen in railway men's affairs it will not lessen the discontent nor prevent the Department from losing more of its highly trained men, who get better pay and better treatment to-day from private employers. Workers outside the Government service have secured substantial increases to keep pace with the rising tide of prices, but they need not entertain even a fleeting hope of enjoying the remarkable prosperity of the farming classes, who get railway transport at bed-rock cost, and sometimes less than cost price. Between the millstones of fixed wages and advancing prices of necessities, the low-paid State employee is being crushed to the point of distraction. We may experience a lull in the men's agitation, but it must break, and with redoubled violence, under the impelling stress of living conditions, unless the Government's remedy is equal to the occasion. Producers, rolling in millions, continue to enjoy the full benefits of a transport system worked by men who are not paid a sufficient wage to decently maintain their families. The men have followed the constitutional path, seeing hopeful signs at its end, but they are in no mood for politicians' expedients. We are uneasy about the National Government's attitude. This dispute is not in the nature of a horse deal, in which each party seeks to get the better of the other, the deal being called off if either party is not satisfied. One party to this dispute is tied down to carrying on a great and essential national service for payment fixed in pre-war times, when conditions were different. The railway man cannot pay his war-time bills on the pre-war wage, and the weekly reminder of that hard fact is making the most staid of them dissatisfied to the point of desperation. It requires very little to turn the whole current of agitation pell-mell into a rocky channel. One of our branches has been urging the A.S.R.S. to take a stop-work ballot. Canterbury Branch—one of the largest—talks of drastic action if necessary, and that is the tone of every resolution published in this issue. The waterside workers, as a large and well-organized body of transport employees, are approaching the executive council with a proposal to link up for effective co-operation for mutual benefit. The possibilities are immense, and with a strongly dissatisfied body of State servants they would be sinister. Let the National Cabinet divest its mind of ideas of carrying through a horse-deal kind of proposition. Railway men's conditions are not attractive enough to keep the men in the service. It would require very little to provoke a crisis beyond power of the National Cabinet to control.

19. *Mr. McDougall* (to witness).] You mentioned about the machinists in New South Wales. Can you state that those men served an apprenticeship?—No, I cannot tell you that.

20. At one time I believe you gave permission to the General Manager to put machinists doing boilermakers' work when there was a shortage of boilermakers. If that is so, why did you not consult the tradesmen concerned?—Well, the position is this: I am delighted to hear that the General Manager came to me and asked my permission to allow him to do it, but out of courtesy I might say that the late General Manager, Mr. Ronayne, sent for me and said, "We have got a lot of boilermaking work to do, and we cannot get boilermakers. There are several men at Hillside who can do the work and with whose work we are satisfied, and we will pay them tradesmen's wages. Have you any objection?"

21. *The Chairman.*] He was speaking to you as secretary of the A.S.R.S.?—That is so. I said I could not see any objection to it. I believe they were put on, but there was immediately a protest from the boilermakers, with the result that the men were withdrawn. That, sir, in itself goes to prove what I have previously said, that the tradesmen desire to prevent any man having equal opportunity notwithstanding the fact that they want it for themselves. They object to any man encroaching upon tradesmen's work notwithstanding the fact that he may be paid tradesmen's wages. Now, sir, I would just like to draw your attention since the matter has been brought up before this Committee to the fact that the tradesmen must recognize that the very foundation of a tradesman's occupation is at stake more now than ever before by the high class of machines that are being brought in. You have only to take up any illustrated paper in this town at the present time and you can find that women are at present engaged in handling the most delicate and up-to-date machinery to the exclusion of tradesmen, and Mr. Lloyd George has stated himself that it is necessary, as he calls it, "to water the trade" for the