

because I consider that such a rule precludes any possibility of this Committee granting recognition to this society. Rule 5 says, "All tradesmen at present employed in the N.Z.R. service and all apprentices in their last year are eligible for membership. Any tradesmen joining in the future who at present are not members of the service be required to produce their indentures or equivalent." Rule 15 states, "Any intending member applying to the secretary will be admitted subject to Rule 5." Now, sir, under the terms of our agreement there is this clause, which we abide by and are prepared to abide by: "It must be open for the employees either to join or withdraw from the society at pleasure under reasonable regulations, and the society must not interfere with the individual privileges and rights of any employee." Now, sir, under those rules the Department might engage a competent tradesman—a man whom they consider a competent tradesman: indeed, the framers of the rules themselves recognize, by stating that a tradesman joining in the future be required to produce his indentures, that a tradesman may be a tradesman and not have indentures. I submit, sir, that that is a rule which could not be registered under the present Conciliation and Arbitration Act; that it is put in there for the purpose of forming a close corporation; and I submit, sir, that no Parliament could give to any body official recognition which has for its object the purpose of setting up a body which proposes to exclude certain members of a State service. That is my contention, and I think on those grounds the petition should be rejected without proceeding any further. If those are not the rules, sir, then I am going to contend that the petitioners have no right to petition this Committee as the New Zealand Railway Tradesmen's Association without they can produce registered rules under that heading. I should like the Committee either to consider this or to express an opinion as to whether or not the point is worth considering, and I should like the Committee to consult with the Department as to whether under those rules there is any possibility of this association receiving official recognition.

The Chairman: We are prepared to hear all your evidence, and will give our decision later.

Dr. Newman: I should like to know, Mr. Chairman, if the witnesses here to-day are to be confined to Railway servants, or can outsiders be called before this Committee?

The Chairman: Any available evidence we shall be prepared to hear, but we do not want repetition.

Dr. Newman: But evidence can be given by those outside the Railway service.

The Chairman: Yes, I think so—any one they like to call.

RICHARD HAMPTON examined. (No. 10.)

1. *The Chairman:* What are you?—A coach-painter in the service of the Railway Department at Addington.

2. You are also president of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants?—Yes.

3. Will you make your statement to the Committee?—I propose, sir, on behalf of the society of which I am president, to cover the ground as concisely as I can, and to put before you our side of the case. First of all I wish to meet the question of strike which has been raised by the petitioners. They have told the Committee that one of the reasons why they specially wish to leave the A.S.R.S. is because of what they term our strike policy. Now, in order that I shall be able to place the policy of the society fairly before you at the present time it will be necessary for me to go back a little into the past. It has been hinted here that whilst Mr. Veitch was in charge of the society he was a level-headed man, but that there is at present in charge of this organization an out-and-out "Red Fed." Now, sir, I want to go back to the time of the Waihi strike. I think that was in 1912. At that time I was a private member of the A.S.R.S., and there was a good deal of feeling throughout the country in labour circles over that strike. There was a certain section in the Addington Workshops who seemed to be favourable to that strike. They came along on one occasion to the Addington Branch in full force and proposed a motion that we vote £25 out of our funds to the support of that strike. I was there and in an absolute minority. I at once knew that that was contrary to our rules, and I drew attention to this fact, that in any case, if it was not contrary to the rules, at least notice of motion should be given of an intention to bring forward such a proposal. The Chairman upheld my contention, but did not rule that it was contrary to the rules. It was arranged that they should give notice of motion in due course, and that a special meeting should be called to consider the matter. When it was brought up again a fortnight or so later I again raised the question that it was contrary to the rules. The Chairman upheld my contention, and the others who were there challenged the Chairman's ruling and moved that he vacate the chair. I had anticipated something of that kind, and had gone to considerable trouble personally to ensure that there should be a majority there who would uphold the Chairman in keeping up the rules. We managed to defeat that movement on that occasion, and I think I can claim some little credit for defeating it. I was not satisfied then with the position. It had not been decided on a straight-out issue, and at the next meeting of the branch I made it my business to move a motion, which was seconded and carried, drawing the executive's attention to this matter and asking them to get legal advice as to whether it was possible for any branch of our society to vote money for strike purposes. Now, what happened? That legal opinion was duly obtained, and it bore out my contention that we had no right to vote branch money for strike purposes. As a result of that the executive sent out a copy of that legal opinion to every one of our branches, and that question was put on a sound footing for all time. Just immediately after that there was an election for branch officers, and those people whom I had fought said, "We are going to capture every office in this branch," and they nominated a member for every office. Now,