

since the watersiders' strike, and that at that particular time everybody thought the waterside workers were done with and we would have no recurrence of what then took place. Our men remained loyal to the Department then, but to-day we find unrest creeping right through the service, by reason of the fact that these very men who created the disturbance are getting increases in wages whilst the men who stood by the Government then have not had an increase for about four years." Now, that was the position as we put it to the Prime Minister and the Hon. Mr. Herries. We were promised, sir, as a result of that deputation that we would receive a definite reply, I think, within a month. Well, what happened? When that month was up, owing to difficulties over which I honestly believe they had no control, the Prime Minister and the Hon. Mr. Herries informed us that they could not give us a definite reply. We pointed out that while we acknowledged that there were difficulties in the way, at the same time our men in the country would not understand that difficulty which had arisen, and we were anxious to avoid any possibility of trouble.

*Hon. Mr. Herries:* What we said was that we could not give you a definite answer until after the end of the financial year.

*Mr. Hampton:* Yes, I said there were difficulties in the way of giving us a definite answer. As a result of that interview we got Mr. Herries's authority to send out on the 16th March a circular to all our branches in which we stated, "We urge the branches to accept our assurance that from the information in our possession, which must be treated as confidential, the position is now, in our opinion, satisfactory, and their interests will be closely watched and safeguarded.—R. HAMPTON, President; M. J. MACK, General Secretary." That circular, sir, went around to every one of our branches, and as the result I believe that circular to some extent allayed the feeling; but I want to say here that you will notice we have been accused of publishing a revolutionary article in the *Review* of the 7th April. It was on the 16th March that we made an appeal to the men to be patient and await the final decision of the Department. I do not remember for sure, but I think I did not see Mr. Wheeler in those few days I was in Wellington. In fact, I do not know whether he is aware of this circular or not, but I remember a number of newspaper men were chasing us at that time, wanting to get information, and I remember mentioning to Mr. Mack that we had seen nothing of Mr. Wheeler. That would be accounted for by the fact that Mr. Wheeler knew the men and knew that he would get no information. But the point is this: this article in the *Review* was on the 7th April. I do not know when the article was actually written, but the *Review* goes to press a week prior to the date mentioned on it. I did not myself see the article before it was written, and I am not going to say now that Mr. Wheeler did wrong. I believe that Mr. Wheeler's intention was to impress upon the Government the extreme gravity of the situation, and from what I know of Mr. Wheeler he is the last man in the world, as I shall presently be able to show you, to write revolutionary articles for the purpose of making a strike. Now I come to this labour conference business; and what is the position in connection with that? The position is that we had invited the delegates from the Engine-drivers, Firemen, and Cleaners' Association to come and confer with us with the avowed object of making one railway society in this country. There had been bitterness and that kind of thing between us, and as I was president of the society I was anxious that all bitterness should be forgotten—that we should make a fresh start, and try and form some common basis under the one organization. While we were engaged in that conference we were asked by the Waterside Workers' Federation to receive a deputation from them. Now, that was surely a harmless thing. As a matter of fact, I have since learned that the Waterside Workers' Federation is not affiliated to what is known as the Federation of Labour. They asked us to receive a deputation, and we received that deputation. We understood, with the E.F.C. delegates—to be perfectly fair to them, who were also interested—that it was purely to hear what those gentlemen had to say. They came along and made certain statements before us, and with part of what they said I agreed. I cannot say that I was in entire accord with everything they said. However, they were moderate men; they did not tell us they wanted us for any extreme purposes; on the contrary, I concluded that anything they wanted to be done was to be done in a lawful and constitutional way. Well, as a result of that deputation certain statements appeared in the newspaper Press right throughout the Dominion. I take no responsibility for any statements in the Press—absolutely none; but, as a result of certain articles in the newspapers, I felt it my duty as president of the society to make a statement on the position, and this is what I said to a Press reporter on Saturday, 29th April last: "In view of certain statements that are appearing in the newspaper Press throughout the Dominion, and which have called forth certain editorial comments, I wish to state that no outside labour organization has suggested to the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants that they should join with them for the purpose of adopting syndicalist methods of organization. It seems to be imagined that the railway servants wish to combine in order, as it were, to hold up the general public at the point of the pistol. In any action we may take, either as a separate organization or in conjunction with any other bodies, the public may rest assured that no such action will be taken for our own selfish ends, and nothing will be done or agreed to by us which is opposed to the welfare of the general public. In return for this we expect only fair and sympathetic treatment at the hands of the Minister of Railways and the Department, and we hope that, if we study the public interest, the public in return will see that we receive such treatment. It appears to me that if the editors of our papers would devote their attention to certain other combinations in this Dominion, which are adopting syndicalist methods and holding up the foodstuffs of the people, their time would be better employed than in setting up a bogey for the purpose of knocking it down." That is the statement I made; and I ask, can any one honestly say in face of those statements that there is anything of the "Red Fed." element in connection with it? That is so far as the deputation is concerned. Then they asked us if we would meet and confer on matters of common interest. I have already given