

you some slight indication as to what I considered those matters were. I may state that under our rules the executive council have no power to bind our organization to affiliate in any way with any outside union. We have no power to do that: we are a purely administrative body: and if any motion had been proposed by any member of that executive council in any way committing our society to any particular course of action, I, as president of that society, would have refused to have accepted it. A motion was moved that Mr. Mack, Mr. Moore, and myself be appointed to confer with those delegates, and I pointed out to the executive that it was not quite clear on what terms they were acting, and I suggested this resolution: "That we meet the watersiders in conference, the president, general secretary, and Mr. Moore to be the representatives, it being understood that these delegates have no power to commit the executive or members in any way." That that was the understanding of the other parties is also made clear by an extract from the *Maoriland Worker* which was quoted in our own *Review*: "The conference is purely consultative. The delegates will discuss the various matters which affect all the organizations represented, and will report the result of their deliberations to their respective bodies, as may be mutually agreed upon. Delegates will not be called upon to bind their organizations in any way." Now, I do not consider, and I do not think any other fair-minded man will consider, that going to a conference under those conditions is a breach of our agreement with the Department. I would just like to say here that this same strike bogey was raised by the engine-drivers themselves when they came before the Railways Committee in 1909 for recognition. This is what was said by Mr. McArley: "With regard to strikes, the Amalgamated Society here has practically the same object in view as the labour leaders in America had when they wanted to get all the workers into one union, so that they could go out on strike. I may say that strikes are altogether out of the question, and on behalf of the E.F.C.A. I may say that no such thing has ever entered our heads. I, as secretary of that organization, will never make use of a strike as a weapon to be used against the Government." Those were the words of Mr. McArley, and history generally repeats itself. My answer to that is: Mr. McArley raised the question in 1909, and since then the country has been involved in two or three strikes, and you, gentlemen, know the attitude of the railway men in connection with those strikes. As far as I am concerned, as leader of the society at the present time, if anything of the kind occurs in future my attitude will be the same as it has been in the past. Another aspect of the strike question is this: I say, gentlemen, if you are going to break the railway unions up into small sections you are going to actually encourage strikes and create a graver danger of strikes occurring. In proof of that I would point out to you what is happening in New South Wales. Mr. Mack, who has been over there lately, tells me that in New South Wales there are seventeen different unions dealing with the occupations in connection with the railway service. Each trade represents its own grievances. Well, if you have read the papers lately you will know that there has been nothing but continual strikes amongst those tradesmen. I am reminded that they represent their grievances before a Wages Board. Well, here is a cable from Sydney dated 21st March, which states, "The New South Wales Minister for Railways, talking to a deputation from the Eveleigh Workshop employees who sought his advice after going on strike, said, 'We have about reached the dizzy limit on this strike business, and this kind of thing must stop. If it goes on we will have to say, "You will darned well have to stop on strike and take the consequences." We cannot allow men to dictate to us.' " Those, gentlemen, are the words of the Minister of Railways of New South Wales in connection with a system which the present petitioners are proposing to introduce into New Zealand, and those words are absolutely true. You can see where that comes in. If you want to prevent strikes you must have one solid organization, for this reason: if the tradesmen have a grievance, if the guard has a grievance, or the shunter has a grievance, it is considered by minds which are not immediately interested in the particular matter, and men can enter into the discussion who can take a fair and impartial view of the position from both sides, because the matter does not immediately concern them. The danger of strikes lies in this fact, that a section of the men have a particular grievance; they go to the employer, they negotiate with him, a bad feeling arises between them, and the consequence is a strike; but if you have some system whereby the labour men or any other men can go into the thing with an open mind, there is every probability that in the majority of cases no strike will take place. I say that so far as the strike issue is concerned that is one of the benefits of our organization, that we can take an impartial view; and I say that it has never operated in any instance, so far as I know, as we have already proved, against any particular body of men. Now, I have already said that we are standing by the agreement, and the Department, so far as I know, have also stood to the agreement. Representations have from time to time been made to them by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and by the Boilermakers' Union, and they have been in every instance, I believe, turned down. The Department has said, "No, we are dealing with the A.S.R.S." And, gentlemen, I am going to say this: that it is my belief that it is the result of those unions having been turned down that this movement is now being engineered to get a separate Tradesmen's Association. But what I want to know is this: is Parliament going to be the party to depart from this agreement? We have abided by it and the Department has abided by it. Is Parliament going to give a lever to men outside which they can use in order to try and get us to affiliate with outside labour? That has been the lever that has been already used. When we have said to those men who have advocated affiliation, "But we have an agreement," they have said, "That is broken." They have referred to the recognition of the E.F. and C. Association: the agreement, they say, is cast on one side, and they have made great use of that. Are you going to give them further encouragement in that direction and a greater lever by recognizing still another society? The terms of our recognition are perfectly plain. They provide for one executive representing each of the various sections of the service, and they state, secondly, that the society is not to be affiliated with any other union. They do not even provide for affiliating