

with a railway union, so that when this agreement was drawn up it is quite apparent that it was the clear intention of those who were then in power that there should be one union representing the Railway service conditionally on its not affiliating with outside bodies. Now, we say that the statements made in the petition are absolutely incorrect. We say that we have represented to the best of our ability and with a considerable degree of success the representations which have been sent forward by these men and other men. It is quite true that we have refused to represent certain questions. We have refused, as you know, to represent the request of 2s. per day increase. Certain gentlemen representing the petition have tried to make you believe that they wished that to come in after the war, but let me make it perfectly clear to you gentlemen that no such indication was made to us. We have put in a verbatim report of what transpired at the interview, and I ask you to peruse that report yourselves if you are under that impression, and if you can find any indication that that was to be after the war, then I shall be extremely surprised. The request, as we understood it, was that it was to be immediately asked for, and our answer clearly indicates that, because we said, "Whilst we are not prepared to ask for 2s. a day for you, we are prepared, on the grounds of the increase in the cost of living, to ask for 1s. per day for all." The whole argument for the increase had been on the question of the cost of living, and as we felt that that affected not only those particular individuals but the whole of the men of the Second Division, we did not feel at that time warranted in asking for special concessions for any one. It has also been left for you to infer that we men are supposed to believe in the extreme socialist doctrine of equal pay for everybody, regardless of what they are doing; and I say that that is nonsensical, and there is absolutely no justification for such assumption—none whatever. The Classification Act is there in its various gradations, and we stand for that. We recognize that there are anomalies in it which require rectifying, but we recognize also that this is not the time to ask for any amendment of the Classification Act or any alteration in connection with it. Now I come to the indenture question. We refused to represent that every man in future shall be able to produce his indentures. That is the rock, they say, on which they stand. It has been said that I toadied to the labourers in connection with that business. Let me say that I never for one moment in connection with that matter had the aspect of the labourer in my mind. I considered the matter entirely from the tradesmen's point of view. I myself was a tradesman, and I was anxious that our request should be put forward in the best possible way. I considered that it would be foolish to ask, as we were asked to do, for an increase in wages, and then in the next breath come along and practically tell the Department that those men who we considered were particularly skilled men and deserving of a high rate of pay—that it would be very unwise to make any suggestion to them that the men on behalf of whom we were pleading were labourers or anything of the kind. I knew, gentlemen, as one well acquainted with the service, as one who has been interested in the A.S.R.S. since I was an apprentice—I knew of no circumstances that would justify such a request being made. I knew also that if the request was made it would be difficult to enforce it, and that if enforced it might do injustice to many highly skilled men who have no indentures. I also considered, gentlemen, that it would also do an injustice to very many tradesmen now in the service, and possibly even to some of those who were asking for it. What do I mean by that? I mean this: that there are quite a number of casual tradesmen in the service. There are more casual tradesmen in the service than any other section of workers, I think. We have had lately a slight reduction in the number of casual tradesmen, only the other day nine or ten moulders having been put off at Addington. What does that mean? This request, if agreed to, means that if those men wanted to get back, no matter how satisfied the General Manager and Workshops Manager and others might be with their skill and ability as workmen, if they could not produce those indentures or papers they would not be allowed to secure re-employment.

*Mr. McDougall:* You are wrong on that point.

*Mr. Hampton:* Very well, you will have an opportunity of putting me right later on. What I would ask this Committee to do is this: I would ask them to get the responsible officers of the Department to find out just how many tradesmen there are in the service who can comply with this request. I am sure if you do that you will see for yourselves that what I say is quite right, and such a request if granted would be the means of injuring a number of really skilled and competent tradesmen. Now, a statement was made the other day in the form of a question. Mr. Rowles said, "If Mr. Hampton thinks there is nothing in it, why did he not put it?" I may tell you, gentlemen, that that is not my method of carrying on the business of the organization. Of course, the executive may overrule me, but as far as I am concerned, and I think I can honestly speak for the whole of the present executive, we have made it the policy, at the repeated requests of the Department, to try and keep down our interviews and requests to matters of vital concern. Consequently, I could not honestly go forward with any proposal unless I was fully persuaded in my own mind—and I am speaking for the executive—that it was just, and that I could say so to the Department when asked. I knew very well that I could not go there with that request. Mr. Hiley and Mr. McVilly would want to know what that was for, and I have to be prepared to give them a reason for every request, and if I cannot give a satisfactory reason then I am not prepared to take it there at all. There is a doctrine in this country I know of, "My class, right or wrong." Well, I do not subscribe to that doctrine, and I never have done so; and while I am not going to take up the position of dictator, and while I am not going to say that my word shall be law, still I am going to say this: that if I honestly and conscientiously as an officer of the society consider that any men I represent have done wrong, or any body of men are asking for what I consider to be a wrong thing, I am going to say, "Gentlemen, you are wrong, and I am not going forward with that proposal." We say, then, that the executive are honestly trying to meet the Department's request to keep down proposals which do not matter, and we considered that that was one which did not matter, because as far as I can see