

own conference has affirmed the principle of the all-round increase in wages being asked for, in order to avoid the creation of anomalies which are the cause of friction and give endless trouble. In the second place, the Department must recognize that if anything is requested on behalf of one section of the service it has to be viewed not from the standpoint of that particular section of the service alone, but from the point of view of the effect upon the service as a whole. Any request from the E.F.C.A., therefore, would necessarily have to be taken into consideration in conjunction with the requests of other societies. I must emphasize the phrase 'in conjunction,' for that is vital to the argument. So, again I ask, is independent existence worth while if that is the object of it? The representatives of the E.F.C.A. have repeatedly stated that they have no antipathy to the A.S.R.S., and in this I believe they are perfectly sincere. They claim, therefore, that their form of organization is the best. Well, it necessarily follows that if it is the best for their particular section it is the best for other sections, and the only logical conclusion would be for the other sections to go and do likewise, with the result that the A.S.R.S. would be no more. Then we would have to consider what would take its place, and that answer is found in the very loose form of federation put forward by the E.F.C.A. delegates. Let us see what this would involve. It would mean that there would be at least four railway societies in the Dominion, each having their separate entity. It would mean four separate executive councils, four general secretaries, four offices, and, I presume, four newspapers, with four editors. On top of all this there would be a federal executive, with a federal secretary. What I would like members of both organizations to carefully consider is, do we really need such an elaborate organization as this, with the resultant overlapping, &c., which would be involved in it? I am of opinion that the scheme of organization outlined by the A.S.R.S. which seeks to place all sections on an equal basis within the one governing body, speaking with one voice on behalf of all, will best suit the purposes of the railway men of New Zealand. That it will entail mutual forbearance, with consideration for one another, I do not deny, but surely it is time we dropped suspicion, and trusted each other to do what is right and reasonable for the welfare not only of a particular section, but for the service as a whole." That, sir, is our policy on that matter. Now, sir, I want to say this: that it is not correct for the tradesmen to come here and say that they are out-voted in any branches of the society. I have already shown that in the headquarters of the Tradesmen's Association at Petone they have a majority in that branch and can control the whole branch. At Newmarket, where the chief organizer comes from, they have also a majority in the branch, and the same applies to Hillside, so there are at least three of the largest branches in which they can control the whole branch if they so wish. Now I say, sir, that the tradesmen do not now desire and never have desired—that is, the great majority of them—to separate from the A.S.R.S. The Tradesmen's Association started with the idea that it was to be kept within the A.S.R.S. organization, that it was to be a kind of subsidiary organization, and the proof of that is found in the rules which provide the payment of the sum of 1s. per quarter per member, on which sum it would not be possible to run a separate organization. The Committee has been told that we could not get a hundred signatures in any one centre—that we would be fortunate if we could get a hundred in the whole of New Zealand. I have here a petition from the Addington centre containing 124 names objecting to separation from the A.S.R.S. I have also a petition from the great majority of the painters in Petone objecting to coming under this Tradesmen's Association. Now, sir, this present petition before the Committee has been got together very hurriedly, and is only *prima facie* evidence that there has been some misunderstanding on the matter. We did not know it was the intention of the tradesmen to petition Parliament on this matter at all. We were entirely taken by surprise. They talked about Addington and Mr. Hampton and that sort of thing. Here is a significant fact: there is not a painter in the paint-shop at Addington who is in favour of breaking away from the A.S.R.S. except one, and he is not a member of the A.S.R.S., and that is the shop in which I work. I can go further, and say that I do my business hurriedly in the dinner-hour and in the mornings before work commences, and before I came up here I personally got in touch with the men, and in every instance where I put the position before them in regard to this petition which seeks that the tradesmen should break away from the A.S.R.S. they signed the petition that I have here against it. I never had a refusal. Attempts were made to get the men to withdraw their signatures. One man came to me who was white in the face. He said, "Where is that petition of yours?" I said, "Steady on, old chap, take it quietly." I could see that he had been got at and that misrepresentations had been made to him. I said, "Look here, I do not want your name on this petition if you want to take it off, but surely it is a fair question to ask what has changed your mind." He said, "I do not want a labourer coming in here and putting me out of my job." I said, "Who told you that yarn?" He said, "I heard it." I said, "Yes, you are not the only one who has heard that." I never said at any time that I was personally in favour of the labourers coming in and doing tradesmen's work. What I have said and will continue to say is that if a man can say and can prove to the satisfaction of the officers of the Department that he can do tradesman's work, then he should be given the opportunity of doing so at tradesman's pay. As far as painting is concerned, we say that the labourers cannot do tradesmen's work, and if they try they will soon be bumped out. That is the position I take up. I say the Department has never to my knowledge introduced such a system. If the heads of the Department choose to employ men in such positions, then I am not going to dictate to them as to whom they shall employ. I have a petition signed by men who are opposed to the object of the petitioners. I do not say that it contains all the names we could get. It is simply put in as an indication that the men have been mistaken, and there are twenty or twenty-five names of men who have signed the Tradesmen's Association petition who have also signed the petition I put in. The men have admitted that they made a mistake, and I believe I am right in saying—I