

put one view before you as an indication of the general policy of the A.S.R.S., and to quote an article which was written at a very critical time, and which I believe Mr. Wheeler honestly wrote not with the view of stirring up turmoil or strife, but with a view of stressing on the Government the possibility of a crisis at hand. I want to make this clear: that while the article appeared in the *Review*, and while the branches in the South Island were carrying the so-called drastic resolutions, I believe it to be my duty to the men I represent and to myself to make it clear that had there not been any war bonus at all, I for one minute would not have countenanced any proposal on the part of the railway men to down tools. Now, Mr. Veitch himself knows that when I went to Wanganui I was on my holiday. Previously, owing to Christmas-time coming on, Mr. Mack and myself were unable to include Napier and Wanganui in our tour. I was enjoying a holiday after strenuous efforts and anxiety in connection with the wages business, and I heard there was a good deal of dissatisfaction at Wanganui and Napier. I said I would go to Wanganui and Napier, and I did so, and there I met two of the hottest crowds I have ever met in my life. They were simply boiling over. They started talking stop-work meetings, &c. I said, "I am here in a responsible position, and you have got to get that sort of thing and all that nonsense out of your heads, otherwise you are going to do your case harm. We must stand for reasonable methods, and I believe if we are reasonable we can attain our ends." When I went to Wanganui Mr. Veitch happened to be there, and he can bear me out in what I say. I opened my address with the statement that so far as the railway men of this country were concerned, strike at a time like this is quite out of the question. I was met by cries of derision from a certain section, and "What are we going to do?" I said, "I do not care what you intend to do, I know what I intend to do, and all my influence is going to be thrown on to the side of reasonable methods." I say this, gentlemen, and I would not think it any honour to be president of the Amalgamated Society if I could not say it: that even if the war bonus had not been agreed to, my efforts would have been concentrated in telling the men not to take any drastic steps, but to show their patriotism and seize their opportunity at a later date to attain their ends. Now, gentlemen, I think I have dealt sufficiently with the question, but I may here say that if there is any point on which I have not made myself clear I will be only too willing to answer any question. In conclusion, I just want to submit for your consideration the following reasons why the prayer of this petition should not be granted: (1.) That it has been shown that clauses 3 and 4 of the petition are untrue, and therefore the grounds for presenting the petition are removed—(i) by the witnesses for the petitioners having admitted that there is no complaint regarding wages and conditions, and that the departmental attitude towards them is satisfactory, and (ii) by the Amalgamated Society having produced proof that wages and conditions have been attended to and improved as far as possible, and that no reasonable request has been refused. (2.) That the claim of the petitioners that they are unable to get representation owing to being outnumbered by other classes of labour is also untrue, because the constitution of the Amalgamated Society provides for equal and direct representation both on the conference and executive council, and in the majority of the workshops the tradesmen predominate, and in every case under this constitution a tradesman has been elected. (3.) That, on the contrary, the Rules Nos. 5 and 15 of the Tradesmen's Association only provide for the admission of those tradesmen who can produce indentures: therefore those tradesmen who by skill and ability may be accepted by the Department are excluded from the said association, and are consequently unable to get representation regarding matters affecting their employment through the association referred to. (4.) That the Minister and the Department cannot, in view of clauses 2 and 6 of the Amalgamated Society's terms of recognition, officially recognize any association which excludes from membership any class of men engaged in that branch of the service which the association is established to protect. To do so would be to give preference to those men who could produce indentures, which is creating a distinction between tradesmen, and establishes a principle which the Arbitration Court has refused to accept.

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WEDNESDAY, 5TH JULY, 1916.

RICHARD HAMPTON examined further. (No. 11.)

1. *Mr. McDougall.*] Do you know that Mr. Mack sent wires to the workshop centres asking the tradesmen whether they were prepared to accept the wages and conditions that obtained under arbitration?—Yes.

2. Do you know what replies were received?—Some of the replies were against it and some said they would leave the matter in our hands. We asked that question because we anticipated the question would be raised here, and, as a matter of fact, it was mentioned in the Department's report. We wanted to get the minds of the men on the question in order to be able to meet anything that might arise in connection with it. The replies can all be produced to the Committee if they wish it.

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JOHN SEPTIMUS BARNETT examined. (No. 12.)

1. *Mr. Hampton.*] What are you?—A leading blacksmith.

2. How many years have you been in the service of the Railway Department?—Thirty-two years.

3. *The Chairman.*] I suppose you call yourself a tradesman?—Yes, I have my indentures with the Department.