

Resolved, (1) That we repudiate any connection with the movement referred to ; (2) in all our endeavours to better our condition we have never been disloyal to the A.S.R.S., and we see no reason why we should change our attitude to the society through which improved conditions have come not only to the tradesmen but to all sections of the Railway service." So that Mr. Sidey will see that this organization with which I was associated had behind it altogether different proposals and different intentions so far as the A.S.R.S. was concerned.

18. *The Chairman.*] You said that that originated in some remote centre in New Zealand ?—Yes.

19. Would you object to say what centre it was ?—Well, I believe it was somewhere in the vicinity of Aramoho.

20. *Mr. Field.*] The Department regards the separation of the engine-drivers from the A.S.R.S. as a mistake ?—I think it will ultimately be shown to be a mistake. The enginemen will themselves find it to be a mistake.

21. And you think they will come back to the parent body ?—I think they will. The Masterton men met and passed a resolution to come back on the same terms they were on when they went out from the parent body.

22. You say the executive of the A.S.R.S. have invariably represented the grievances of the tradesmen as far as they could. You are aware there is one rock on which they stand—namely, the question of indentures. You did not represent that grievance to the Department because you did not approve of it ?—Well, I was not on the council when that deputation came up, but that would have made no difference. I would not have been a party to representing that particular grievance because I believe it is a harsh and unjust proposal, and a proposal that should not commend itself to any representative in this democratic country. It means this: that the lad from the country, for instance, is debarred if he has not served his apprenticeship. If he comes to town and becomes associated with mechanical work and shows an aptitude for it, this proposal says that because he was not bound apprentice to a trade that he should be for ever compelled to become a labourer, or a doctor, or a lawyer, but one thing he could not become was a tradesman. The country requires lawyers to pass an examination, not because it desires to protect them as a ring, but because it desires to protect the public against imposters; but our friends do not advocate that the Department who employs the men should be protected against imposters, but that they themselves should have an artificial barrier put around them.

23. Do you not think if you refuse them it would have a discouraging effect on apprentices ?—I do not think so at all. We have in the A.S.R.S. a proposal now before us which is taking concrete shape which will do away with any injustice there might be in regard to apprentices. I cannot for the life of me see that because I had to put in six years and five months apprenticeship that every other fellow who enters should be bound to serve a similar term. The Department has recognized this, and apprentices who enter the service now are in a different position to those who entered the service years ago. An apprentice who enters the service now goes for five years, and is paid at the end of his term 10s. per day. The petitioners' attitude is because they have served five years apprenticeship, that all boys for all time should be compelled to do the same. We say that in this country at the present time, with our national education system, for a boy who has not the opportunity of becoming something better, that at least he should have the opportunity of becoming a tradesman, and we cannot for the life of us see that any injustice is done to any one. All the trend of modern industrial history goes to show that our friends are like Mrs. Partington with her broom, trying to keep back the tide of industrial progress. When a man went for a job the other day the employer said, "All I want to see is how quick you can put the work on the floor, and that is all I want." That is all the State has a right to expect from the Railway Department. I do not see why the Railway Department, because it is a great public concern, should be hampered and restricted any more than any other concern. Mr. Hampton was careful to show you that he was not a "Red Fed.," but I am a socialist to this extent, that I think all public utilities should be owned and controlled by the country; but that will not happen when public industries are restricted more than private industries.

24. If a fair ballot was taken in the service on the question of separation from the A.S.R.S. do you think the result would be that there would not be a large majority voting for separation ?—I think so. If we had the opportunity of taking a ballot I do not think the majority of the tradesmen would vote for severance from the A.S.R.S.

25. Do you suggest that the method followed was not a fair way of obtaining a ballot—apparently a large majority of the tradesmen signed the petition ?—A large number have repudiated it.

26. You would not be afraid of another ballot being taken ?—Oh no, I would not be in the least.

27. You will be prepared to put the question to the test of another ballot ?—Yes, that is all we want.

28. *Mr. Dickson.*] You mentioned the fact of a meeting at Masterton and of the meeting passing a resolution. What do you know of that ?—I say the resolution was passed; I do not know anything about the circumstances.

29. Do you know how many there were there ?—No, only that there was a combination of the whole of the Second Division.

30. You know how many men of the Second Division are in Masterton ?—No.

31. The engine-drivers, firemen, and cleaners are not taking part in this petition at all, but you have brought them into it by the statement you have made ?—I know there was a meeting of the combined railway men of the Second Division, and they passed a resolution favouring one organization with equal representation upon the council, and a conference of the maintenance, loco., traffic, and workshops departments.

32. Would you be surprised if evidence was given here that there were only three engine-drivers, firemen, and cleaners present at that meeting ?—No, I would not be.