

48. I want you to answer that question whether you consider 1s. a day is the proper difference ?—I will answer the question in a minute, but I am not going to answer until I have done with you. I believe that a mechanic is such a valuable member of the community at all times that his wages should favourably compare with a lawyer, as far as I can see.

49. Some mechanics earn more than lawyers ?—The only useful men in the community to-day are soldiers, mechanics, and doctors ; and the time may come when the mechanics cannot be paid too highly.

50. And is that a mechanic who has not served his apprenticeship ?—Yes, as long as he is a mechanic. Of course, papers do not prove that a man is a mechanic. Do you know that I can bring you papers from scores of men who are not mechanics. They have got their papers but they have not got the skill.

51. Are you going to answer that question now as to the difference in pay between a tradesman and a labourer ?—I have told you that a mechanic cannot be too highly paid.

52. Will you answer the question Yes or No ?—I will say that I will not answer. I have always refused to answer that question.

53. Some years ago the A.S.R.S. made a noise about the taking on of a lot of men, some of whom were promoted over the heads of others employed in the service. Would you object if the same thing happened again ?—I do not remember the circumstances.

54. I am speaking of the returned soldiers from the South African War ?—I was not connected with it and do not know anything about it.

55. *Mr. McDougall.*] Have you told the tradesmen at Hillside what your views were with regard to labourers encroaching on tradesmen's rights, also your views on credentials ?—Yes, I have, and when I was speaking to the tradesmen at a meeting I told them of an instance I knew of personally of a lad who commenced his apprenticeship with the Department. He came seven miles to the centre in which he worked. He told me one day that his father had been stricken with a serious illness and could no longer work, and the lad asked if he could not have his indentures cancelled and become a rivet boy in order to earn more to assist his parents. I appealed to the men at Hillside and asked them if they would agree to the lad becoming a tradesman in after-years. Yes, I told them my views on this subject.

56. You are working at the present time at Invercargill ?—Yes.

57. You said that before you left Invercargill one of the men approached you or you approached that individual, and he told you that if the men had known that we were asking for the sole right to represent the tradesmen, that they would not have signed our petition ?—Yes, that is so.

58. Are you aware that we are not after the sole right to represent them ?—No. I said it was depriving the A.S.R.S. of what it already possessed—the sole right to represent grievances.

59. How are we depriving the A.S.R.S. ?—If you had the sole right, for instance, to sell Ford motor-cars in this country and somebody else came along and sold them you would be deprived of your sole rights.

60. Do you know that with the exception of four or five every tradesman signed our petition ?—I did not know it ; and I am not distressed at being informed.

61. You inferred just now that quite a number of men had signed the petition, and that the ink was scarcely dry before they wished they could reverse their action ?—Yes.

62. Was that hearsay or did you know from the men themselves ?—I believe the petition is in.

63. I was only asking you if it was hearsay ?—I believe the petition is in, and members have the information there.

64. Were there any men in Invercargill who signed the petition ?—There were no men asked so far as I am aware of.

65. You took a prominent part in the deputation which came to Wellington and you gave evidence when the tradesmen gave evidence ?—I was appointed chairman of a large deputation which came to Wellington representing tradesmen, and I was appointed speaker before the General Manager.

66. And also chairman of the Hillside Tradesmen's Committee ?—Yes.

67. You said you were always satisfied as far as the A.S.R.S. had represented the tradesmen ?—If I said that I wish to retract and wish to say this : that since the reorganization in 1910 I have always been satisfied under the existing conditions.

68. Previous to that you were not satisfied ?—Previously I was not.

69. *Mr. Hampton.*] Can you tell the Committee what are the wages of labourers at the present time ?—9s. per day.

70. And what do tradesmen get ?—11s. 6d., in general.

71. The labourers' wages in general would be 9s. per day, and the tradesmen's wages in general would be 11s. 6d. per day : is that so ?—Yes.

72. Then there is more than 1s. difference ?—Yes. I am glad you asked me that question, because so far as tradesmen are concerned I have always stood for the abolition of the second-grade tradesmen. I have always stood for this : that the Department itself should give every boy who serves his time with the Department the right during his apprenticeship to qualify for the first grade.

73. *Mr. McDougall.*] You said that the wages of a labourer were 9s. ?—I believe that is right.

74. Could you tell the Committee what the wages of a skilled labourer are—for instance, you will admit that a lifter is a skilled labourer ?—10s. 6d. a day is the maximum.

75. And the maximum of a tradesman is what ?—11s. 6d.

76. *Mr. Hampton.*] Are there any tradesmen who get more than 11s. 6d. ?—Oh, yes.

77. Who are they ?—Leading tradesmen get 13s. 6d. a day as a maximum.

78. But apart from leading tradesmen are there any special allowances ?—Yes, there are. Smiths engaged upon new engine-work get an extra allowance of 6d. ; fitters employed on new work, and carpenters and angle-iron smiths, 6d. a day extra ; acetone workers get an extra allowance of 1s. per day, and the men in charge of new locomotives 1s. a day.