

might say that I saw the petition going round, but I would like to make it clear to the Committee that although they have had evidence that some members have not read the petition, I know that some did not see it.

12. *Mr. Dickson.* Did you sign it?—When sitting at dinner a young man came around with a sheet of paper and asked me if I was prepared to sign a petition for the association to be recognized by Parliament. Being an old bird I was not caught. He asked three others alongside of me to sign it and they did so, but within two hours of signing the petition they said they did not wish to leave the A.S.R.S. If you wish their names I could give them. When I stated that this petition meant that they should separate from the A.S.R.S. they then signed the other petition.

13. *Mr. Hampton.* Speaking for the Addington Workshops, do you know of any other men in the same position?—Yes. The whole of the tradesmen in the Ways and Works are also under the wing of the Canterbury Branch. Every member working in the Ways and Works shop was present at a meeting which I addressed last Friday at dinner-time. I asked them straight out what they intended to do, to remain in the A.S.R.S. or get recognition for the Tradesmen's Association, and they unanimously agreed that we should do our work through the A.S.R.S. That is the whole difficulty in regard to this question, and it has not been placed fairly before the men on any one occasion. They have always had the idea that if an association was formed in the same way as the Engine-drivers, Firemen, and Cleaners' Association— it would be to discuss our own affairs and bring them before the A.S.R.S. That is what is behind the minds of the men at Addington who are tradesmen.

14. And you were authorized by those Ways and Works men to speak on behalf of those men against the petition?—Yes.

15. *Mr. Veitch.* I am not quite clear about the statement you made in regard to the blank sheet of paper. You said you were sitting at dinner and a young man came along?—Yes, the secretary of the Addington Branch.

16. And he asked you to sign a petition for recognition for the Tradesmen's Association?—Yes.

17. Do I understand you to say that he brought along one sheet of blank paper not being attached to the petition?—There was no petition on it. It was a blank sheet with the exception of a few names on top. They dropped the petition on the straight in the shop, and one of the men in our society saw it and kept it.

18. *Mr. Field.* Does it not seem strange that of 280 men who recorded their votes, 241 should have voted for and only 32 against?—I should like to see the ballot-paper. [Paper produced to witness.]

19. That does not state distinctly that there is to be separation from the A.S.R.S.?—I can safely say that I never saw that voting-paper in Addington.

20. And there were similar numbers voted at other places—namely, at Petone, 223 “Yes” and 42 “No”; Newmarket, 251 “Yes” and 19 “No”; Hillside, 184 “Yes” and 20 “No,” and so on?—If they put it through at Addington they kept it from men who could understand the thing.

21. You would not mind submitting to another ballot?—I would be very pleased to do so.

22. Do you say that a lot of men did not see it?—I am sure they did not.

23. Of the tradesmen in the Addington Workshops there are 280 represented here on this petition: do you not think that is a good proportion of them?—I do not know, but I should think it would be a good proportion.

24. You think there are only thirty-two who understood the ballot-paper—that is, who voted against it?—Well, I have given you the plain facts, and I defy even intelligent gentlemen in this room to understand at a glance. It was dinner-hour and the men were in a hurry. There were seventy men there, and it did not give them much time to see what they were doing. If you took another petition around Addington to-morrow, even if the petition was asking for an increase in pay, they would not sign it. They will not sign any piece of paper at all now.

25. Will you tell the Committee the contents of the circular you received from the Department?—I did not receive any.

26. The circular about the indentures before you held this meeting?—Not from the Department.

27. Where was it from—was it from the A.S.R.S.?—No, I have not seen it. I know there was such a thing going around, but not in Addington.

28. Were you asked by any foreman or Workshops Manager at Addington about indentures?—No, I have not heard anything from the Department about indentures at all, and if so I would be in trouble myself because I have not got any.

29. Do you belong to the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters?—I used to.

30. Did you believe in that society?—Certainly.

31. Did you believe in the conditions of that society?—I was in it for three years after joining the Railway service, and I found it was no good to me after that. When I joined the Railway service and found that I was likely to remain there, the only Society that I found would be of any benefit to me was the A.S.R.S.

32. You did belong to the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and you know their conditions in regard to trade. Do you agree with other witnesses about a man being an apprentice to the trade?—If he can be apprenticed I think he should be, but if he has not had the opportunity of being apprenticed here, he should have an opportunity of working his way through life.

33. You know that is one of the principal things laid down in your own union?—Yes.

34. There is no union so strong on that as the Carpenters' Union?—But it cannot be carried out in all cases.

35. You know the Carpenters' Union would not allow a labourer to do a bit of carpentering on a shed?—They allow permits, and those who hold them work at the trade. I have not heard of that in the Railway Department—of a labourer being put on to do a tradesman's work—and to prove that you have only to see the splendid work turned out at Addington. None but tradesmen could turn out such work.