

46. Have the Department in the past abused the trust you are prepared to put in them in the future: have the responsible officers of the Department put men in as tradesmen and paid them as tradesmen who are not competent men?—

*The Chairman:* I do not think that is before the Committee.

[The question of the admissibility of the question was discussed by the Committee, the Chairman finally ruling that the witness could decline to answer the question.]

47. *Mr. Hampton.*] Have the Department in the past abused the trust you are prepared to put in them in the future: have the responsible officers of the Department put men in as tradesmen and paid them as tradesmen who were not competent men?—I decline to answer the question.

48. Do you consider the possession of indentures by an applicant for employment proof that he is a qualified tradesman?—The possession of indentures proves that that individual has honestly tried to learn that trade to which he was indentured, and we as tradesmen consider that whoever enters the service as a tradesman should come through that door.

49. That is to say, the position you take up is that no one, no matter how skilled he may be, is to work as a tradesman for the New Zealand Railway Department unless he can show that he has served his time as an apprentice?—That is the attitude we take up.

50. Supposing through circumstances over which a lad had no control he was not indentured to a trade, and in after-years he has seen how he has missed his opportunity, would you deny him the right to acquire skilled knowledge?—You have asked me that question already, and I informed you then, as I do now, that it does not matter how old a person may be we have no objection to that man going into the trade provided he serves an apprenticeship.

51. What are your ideas of an apprenticeship?—I think that is a superfluous question to ask; but, as obtains at present, a man should serve five years to acquire that knowledge and skill necessary to make him proficient in the work he takes up.

52. Then your position is that if an adult finds himself in the position of a square head in a round hole, and finds that he has an aptitude for another trade, you would not allow him to work at that other trade unless he had served five years' apprenticeship at that trade?—That particular point we have not taken into consideration, where a man, if he had served an apprenticeship in one trade, should go to another; but, expressing my own personal view, I think he should not be allowed.

53. You have said to the best of your knowledge there are five hundred tradesmen who are members of the A.S.R.S.?—I said I believed there were.

54. Where did you get your information from?—I think that is a superfluous question, because I said I estimated that there was such a number. We had an idea of the number in the workshops in the different centres. We totalled those up and allowed for a certain percentage of those outside, and as far as we could make out our estimate was about five hundred.

55. Are you yourself a member of the Wellington Branch of the A.S.R.S.?—I think I already said I was.

56. Are you aware that as a member of that branch you are entitled to apply to the Head Office for this information?—No.

57. Did you apply?—I did not apply.

58. Do you know that less than a month ago twenty-seven tradesmen joined the Wellington Branch from the Petone Workshops?—I do, and I also know the reason why.

59. You said that most of the tradesmen in the service were also members of outside unions: are you a member?—No, I am not.

60. Do you know anything of the conditions of the engineering trade outside?—I know the conditions that obtain in my own trade.

61. Do you think, then, from your knowledge and conditions of your own trade that your conditions in the Railway are worse than those outside?—I was just going to say that I cannot see the use of that question. We are here for a particular purpose, and I do not see how that question is relevant to the matter, and I decline to answer it.

62. Do you know of any union outside the Railways which has a right to say that a man shall not work at a trade in which he cannot produce indentures and papers?—Yes.

63. Will you state what that union is?—The boilermakers can answer that question. We have a representative of the boilermakers here, and he will be only too pleased to answer you on that point.

64. You made a request to us for 2s. per day increase in wages?—

*The Chairman:* Where does the question of wages come in?

*Mr. Hampton:* I am not prepared to go on if these questions are going to be raised. I am here to get a fair hearing from the Committee.

*The Chairman:* You will get a fair hearing. You will get your turn to put your case before the Committee when the time comes.

*Mr. Hampton:* I think, then, it will save a considerable amount of the time of the Committee, and perhaps be better for our side, if I simply listen to these gentlemen, and then if the Committee will afford me the opportunity of reviewing what they have said, that that will be the better way of doing the business.

*The Chairman:* Please yourself.

65. *Mr. McVilly.*] You say in the Petone list of the petition which you have put in you are members of the Railway service: do you mean members of the permanent staff?—In the petition there are not only members of the permanent staff but any one who is employed by the Department, whether casual or permanent.

66. Whether they are termed "casuals" or "permanent"?—Yes.

67. You include amongst your list of tradesmen signal-adjusting engineers: what sort of man is that?—It should really have been "signal-fitter."