

would never have been tolerated in a private outside workshop anywhere in New Zealand or Australia, and I pointed this out—drilling stays out of boilers and expanding tubes, making rivets and bolts. I was told that there was no hope of tradesmen getting anything represented. Even at that time tradesmen said it was useless, because the unskilled would block anything that tradesmen cared to bring forth. Indeed, the only use the A.S.R.S. has apparently for the tradesmen is to swell their numbers and to get their money. They are out to serve the interests of the unskilled. They are not there to represent matters touching the conditions under which tradesmen work. In May of last year, at the time of our conference, Mr. Hampton, then workshops' representative and now the president of the A.S.R.S., said in the presence of and to a deputation from the Railway Tradesmen's Association that he was referring to tradesmen who, being members of an outside union, paid only 5s. per year to the A.S.R.S., and for that reason said these tradesmen were no use to them. We asked the question, why did he represent them, and he answered, "Oh, you help to swell the numbers." The tradesmen want an association which has been formed to protect their interests, and where they are not welcomed only because they swell the numbers. The A.S.R.S. is, and has been as long as I have been in the Government service, dominated and controlled by unskilled—some seven thousand-odd unskilled to about five hundred tradesmen. The A.S.R.S. will not decide anything in our favour for fear of the unskilled complaining, and to show their preference in respect to the lower grades, I might instance the protection of porters in respect of promotion to guards. We are completely submerged in the unskilled labour. They will not represent our grievances properly to the Department, and even if they were willing they are not in any case qualified to place matters touching our skilled trade before the Department. Many matters touching our skilled trade they do not understand. We tradesmen even admit that in our own trades there are matters which we do not quite understand ourselves or as well as men in the trade. In 1915 a deputation was to wait on the Department. There was the president for a representative of a particular trade coming with the deputation. The matter in this case did actually touch the interests of tradesmen, and in order that our interests might be properly represented we asked that a tradesman might accompany the deputation. Their answer to our request was that they looked upon that as a want of confidence in the executive and refused it (see page 25 of the verbatim report of the official interview of the executive council with the tradesmen's deputation). When first formed—indeed, all through my connection with the Tradesmen's Association—we had not intended to separate from the A.S.R.S. We wanted to protect our interests, but had no intention of leaving the A.S.R.S. Matters, however, have during these years been becoming so impossible and intolerable that we have been compelled by sheer necessity and by neglect and unfair treatment to insist upon an official recognition of our own association, particularly after the unsatisfactory result of our interview with the executive council of the A.S.R.S. in May of last year, when such statements as the following were made to us: "We are prepared to fight for you men, but if you think you are better able to do it, by all means do it" (by J. Mack, secretary A.S.R.S., May, 1915, verbatim report), p. 14): and also their attitude in regard to remits 13 and 14. All we desire is permission to see the Department ourselves and to represent matters touching tradesmen. This will not make any difference so far as the Department is concerned. It will mean that matters can be represented direct by tradesmen, and not submitted first to the censorship of a hostile body, and in some cases not represented and in other cases not properly represented. They are unfamiliar with the real matters which concern tradesmen. There is a most profound and deep-seated dissatisfaction with the A.S.R.S. Tradesmen insist upon their rights to represent their own grievances. They deny the right of the unskilled men to sit in judgment upon disputes and grievances which the skilled men have against the unskilled. The tradesmen deny their right to prevent from reaching the Department any representation touching a matter in which the skilled men complain of the unskilled. They have a confidence that the Railway Department will do what is fair. They desire permission only that the Railway Department shall hear them upon their own matters. They say that the Railway Department should not compel them to be heard only through a hostile mouthpiece and indirectly. There is, so far as I have been acquainted with the South, complete unanimity. Out of 236 tradesmen in Dunedin 225 have signed, and in Invercargill 51 out of 59 signed. I wish to make it clear that the figures I have just quoted represent the number of tradesmen in Otago and Southland that had the opportunity of signing the petition, and every tradesman that came under our notice had that opportunity, but there are a number of tradesmen who are employed in the Maintenance Department and who work in the country whom we were not able to approach, and who consequently did not have the opportunity of signing the petition. There are possibly several tests which may fairly be applied before official recognition is granted. Our association satisfies every reasonable test. The first test is that the body should have sufficient identity of interests. This is a test that the A.S.R.S. itself does not satisfy, because it is composed of a body having divergent and conflicting interests, proved by the result of the conference with A.S.R.S. executive last year—preference to the greatest number, the unskilled. The A.S.R.S. itself could not have satisfied this test. The tradesmen have sufficient identity of interests. The second test is that the body should not be unreasonably small. We satisfy this test. The petition has been signed by over twelve hundred tradesmen. We estimated that there were seventeen hundred tradesmen in the service before the war. The tradesmen have been very greatly reduced since the war. In my workshop alone we have lost, I should think, about forty tradesmen. I venture to say that if the A.S.R.S. took up a petition against the Tradesmen's Association they would not get a hundred tradesmen who would not be in favour of official recognition. The E.F. and C.A. had no more identity of interest, and, indeed, had not such a large number as our association, and official recognition was granted to it. If they had a good cause for recognition, as we believe they had, so should official recognition be