

granted to us. We have tried everything reasonably possible to avoid official recognition. It is only because we have been forced by the very necessity of things to require official recognition that we have reluctantly, and only after considerable deliberation, determined to seek it. There will never be peace between tradesmen and the A.S.R.S., and tradesmen will never rest until they get official recognition. If official recognition be not granted to them, then no doubt outside unions will take up their cause, and it will be a case of having to go to the Arbitration Court to protect their interests instead of coming direct and relying upon the fairness of the Railway Department. In my statement I referred to the work being done in the workshops. When I went to Hillside as a boilermaker I had to judge the men by the work they were doing as to whether they were tradesmen or labourers. I might say that I saw a man drilling stays out of a boiler, a thing that would not be tolerated for five minutes in private-owned shops in New Zealand. I have also seen a boilermaker at one end expanding the tubes, and at the other end of the boiler a labourer doing the same work. Those are the points I desire to bring before the Committee, and I do not think I have anything more to add. Our president has covered most of the ground, and I endorse all that he has said. I thank you for the patient hearing you have extended to me, and hope you will deal with the case on its merits, and in that case I feel confident you will give your judgment in our favour.

2. *Mr. Sidey.*] Have the responsible officers of the Department put men in as tradesmen and paid them as tradesmen when they were not competent men?—I have no objection to answer that question, but I want it to be clearly understood that we are not going to raise any question in regard to those who are recognized at the present time by the Department as tradesmen. We accept them as tradesmen in our society, and welcome them; but understand clearly that it is in the future we ask for protection. I will give a couple of instances to show what I mean. We have in Invercargill at the present time three labourers and three painters who were engaged in painting on the railway buildings. Lately the three painters were paid off and the three labourers were kept on to do the painting-work. There is also a labourer filling the position of leading fitter who has never served one month's apprenticeship. There is also a carpenter employed by the Department who served his time in a grocer's shop weighing out sugar and tea.

3. I want to know if the tradesmen have considered in the past that they have not been adequately remunerated by the Department?—Our answer is that we have not got the wages that we are certainly entitled to. We have asked for more wages.

4. *Mr. Field.*] Do you assert that you have not yet had restored to you the wages you were getting before the reduction in 1881?—I would like to have that question referred to our chairman. He has been in the service longer than I have, and he can speak better with regard to the conditions in 1881 than I can. I understand from his figures that the tradesmen in the service have not had the wages made up to them which were taken off about 1881.

5. With respect to the case you cited in Invercargill with regard to the painting of a building, were they railway employees?—The whole of those men were railway employees.

6. *Mr. McVilly.*] Will you give us some indication of what wages you think you are entitled to? The president has told the Committee that he is satisfied. What wages are the members of your trade earning outside?—I do not know whether the wages question is going to creep in here or not. We had no intention whatever of introducing the wages question into this matter: it is not in our petition.

7. You are not stressing that point?—No, not at all. We have no intention of introducing it.

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CHARLES MEAD examined. (No. 3.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A blacksmith in the Petone Workshops. My evidence will run in a slightly different direction to that of the others. It will deal chiefly with the constitutional difficulties the tradesmen have to put up with by being members of the A.S.R.S. In supporting the petition of the tradesmen of the Government railway shops of New Zealand for a tradesmen's society I may say that I have been about fourteen years a member of the A.S.R.S., and that about twelve years ago I was elected by conference to a seat on the executive council and also its vice-president. I wish to place before the Committee a few events which occurred about that time, and which I consider is decisive evidence of the great difficulty tradesmen have to get matters which are considered to be in their interests properly discussed by members of an association the majority of whom are not tradesmen. About 1905 an increase of 6d. per day was given to the men in the lower grades of pay of the Second Division who were not tradesmen. At that time there was only a small difference between the wages of tradesmen and those who were not tradesmen. The new rise cut still more into that small difference. All tradesmen felt the injustice that was being done by reducing the small difference that existed, and considered that an increase should also be given to tradesmen to maintain their right to higher pay, because of the skill, expert knowledge, responsibility, and application necessary to produce tradesmen's work. The blacksmiths especially took the matter up, and by deputation to the Minister and to the General Manager pointed out the injustice that was being done by reducing the small difference that existed in the pay of tradesmen and some of those to whom the increase was given. As vice-president, before seeing the Minister, I endeavoured to get the executive to ask the General Manager if any increase was to be given to blacksmiths. This was refused by the executive. Executive refused what tradesmen considered important enough for a deputation to the Minister, which showed that the executive did not fully grasp the injustice that was being done to the blacksmiths. I was at that time acting as direct representative of tradesmen on the executive. A little later, when the conference met, I as vice-president applied to conference to be heard before them in respect to certain items that the branch of which I was at that time