

gentlemen on the executive council were of opinion that we were right they dare not say so, because they would not reign for five minutes. In spite of the manner in which the meetings were called, and that the non-tradesmen were allowed to come in and vote against tradesmen on tradesmen's questions, in three out of the four principal centres in New Zealand—Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin—a motion of no-confidence was carried in the executive council after they had made their explanation. In Petone the tradesmen were absolutely indignant at the idea of having to vote and carry a motion against the non-tradesmen, and although they attended in large numbers they were careful not to put a motion of no-confidence forward because they said their quarrel was with the executive council of the A.S.R.S., and not with the non-tradesmen in the workshops. In Wanganui a motion of thanks was carried after hearing the explanation, but I think I am safe in saying that forty tradesmen resigned from the A.S.R.S. the next day after hearing the explanation. In three of the large centres out of the four, after hearing the explanation, they carried a motion of no-confidence. Even in the Addington Workshops, where Mr. Hampton, the president of the executive, is situated, he was unable to convince the tradesmen that we were not right, and in his own workshop, from the men who knew him better than we did, a motion of no-confidence was carried. In view of those facts, and in view of the large number who voted in favour of a separate organization, and in view of the larger number who signed that petition, can they, gentlemen, say they have the confidence of the tradesmen? We as tradesmen desire the right to put our own grievances direct before the Department, and not through another body whose interests are conflicting, if not hostile. In the Australian States the tradesmen can conduct their negotiations through their own trades-unions if they so desire, and the same can be said of Great Britain and America. Our desire is to take care of our own interest; we have no wish to interfere with any other section of the service, and neither do we wish any other section of the service to interfere with us. We consider, gentlemen, that our request is a reasonable one, and we trust, after hearing the evidence, that you will grant the prayer of our petition.

3. *Mr. Veitch.*] How long have you been in the service?—Three and a half years, within a day or two.

4. *Mr. Field.*] On the occasion you refer to when a number of tradesmen left the A.S.R.S. in the different centres, we understand that twenty-seven additional members joined in Wellington!—I do not say that a number of tradesmen left in the different centres, but I might say at the outset that it has been our aim right through to prevent men from leaving the A.S.R.S. We have never encouraged them to do so—in fact, we have discouraged them from leaving the A.S.R.S. until we get recognition. Even then they can stay in if they wish; but in Wanganui, absolutely on their own account and in spite of the advice given by Mr. McDougall, over forty resigned from the A.S.R.S. I know that a number of tradesmen have joined the A.S.R.S. lately, but representations have been made to them which influenced them to a certain extent. There is nothing to be taken out of that.

5. *Mr. Hampton.*] Are you a casual or a permanent hand?—I am a casual hand.

6. In regard to the forty whom you say left after hearing my explanation, are you quite sure that the whole of the forty heard my explanation?—I had information from the secretary of the Wanganui branch, who told me that after a meeting of the tradesmen they were so indignant that over forty of them resigned.

7. But can you say from your own knowledge that those forty were actually present at the meeting I addressed?—I could not say.

8. Can you say how many tradesmen were present at Addington when the motion of no-confidence was carried in me?—No, I cannot.

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WILLIAM JAMES CUTTLE examined. (No. 5.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A painter in the employ of the Railway Department at Wanganui.

2. Do you wish to make a statement to the Committee?—I am president of the Wanganui Branch of the New Zealand Railway Tradesmen's Association. I have been eleven years in the service. The first and essential point that brings us here to-day is one and the same. The interests of tradesmen and the desires of the petitioners are identical. They desire to obtain a tradesmen's association upon the accorded official recognition from the Railway Department. What we demand is permission that the Railway Department will hear us on matters touching tradesmen alone. We can at present belong to the A.S.R.S., but it is such a large body and its interests are not always our interests, and our interests have been neglected by it. All we ask is that the Department shall hear our requests touching tradesmen. We are not now asking for any increase in wages or any remedy of condition. We are asking that it is fair and right that when we have a grievance we should be allowed to tell the Department that we have such a grievance. We as tradesmen when we have a complaint or grievance must first submit it to a body which is represented by a majority of unskilled men. Our experience has been that they have regarded our interests as conflicting and hostile to their own, and we have been forced to the conclusion that it is no use mentioning matters to the A.S.R.S. because they will not be fully represented or will, indeed, be refused. Tradesmen in the service are completely dissatisfied with the A.S.R.S. The society is large, and it represents such a diversity of interests that it has come to look after the interests of its great majority and to neglect the interests of the minority. To show how tradesmen are in sympathy I may say that every tradesman in the Wanganui district with the exception of three signed the petition, and I may say that there was no undue pressure used or any subterfuge adopted to get men to sign the petition. For example, one man said he