

and that as a result of the inaction, refusal, and hostility of the A.S.R.S. Then again, sir, we have in evidence the petitioners stating that they have no complaint with regard to the conditions under which they are working. Now, sir, if there is no complaint with regard to the conditions, and that the question of wages and conditions do not enter into the matter, then the ground for the petition is taken away. If, on the other hand, there is ground for complaint—that is, that the wages and conditions have not been attended to—then I respectfully submit that I am entitled to show to the Committee that the wages and conditions of the tradesmen have been attended to, and have been improved as a result of the representations made by the A.S.R.S. Now, sir, the petitioners have told you that in 1910 the tradesmen waited upon the executive council, and that the executive council accompanied them to the General Manager of Railways to put forward their own case. That is quite true. There was no definite decision arrived at then, and the matter was left in the hands of the Amalgamated Society, who continued to press the question of wages on behalf of the tradesmen, with the result that in 1911 an amendment to the Act was brought down which gave them an increase of wages of 6d. per day. In 1911 the executive council again had representations made to it, and they were then of the opinion that the tradesmen were not adequately paid. Further representations were made to the Department, which were rejected; but if Mr. McVilly will tell you, the fact is that the president at that time, Mr. Wilson, and myself subsequently waited upon the General Manager and urged the question of wages for tradesmen only. The result was that the Department considered the matter and granted a further increase of 6d. per day, which increase was brought down in the amendment to the schedules of the Classification Act, 1912. Now, sir, there are other matters affecting the tradesmen which have very conveniently been overlooked or not mentioned. For instance, reference was made to the conference of 1906, when the matters regarding the tradesmen were turned down. That conference asked the Department to allow each day's work to stand by itself for the purpose of overtime, but that was rejected. The Amalgamated Society has continued since that time up to recently to press the claim of the tradesmen for each day's work to stand by itself, with the result that that has now been accomplished, and the workshops are the only section of the Railway service to-day who receive overtime after completing a day's work. Every other section of the Railway service has to work a forty-eight-hour week. Then, sir, the question of carpenters being supplied with tools was another question affecting tradesmen. That also has been secured upon representations made by the Amalgamated Society for the tradesmen. Holiday leave has been increased from seven to ten days, and for over ten years' service to thirteen days, per year; and upon representations made by the Amalgamated Society with regard to passes, those members of the service who have had ten years' service are given first-class railway passes. In addition to that regulations have been brought down affecting the retiring-leave, and the fortnightly payment of wages in the workshops has been brought about as a result of representations being made by us. Now, sir, in addition to that, I find that the petitioners have stated that since 1910 they had hoped to have something done through the A.S.R.S. I have had taken out a return showing those matters which have been dealt with as affecting workshop hands generally, and I find that since 1910 we have made representations to the Department upon 637 questions affecting individuals and conditions in the railway workshops. That return I am prepared to produce to this Committee. I am prepared to produce every book and every document in connection with them if the Committee think it desirable, and I will give for the information of the Committee a tabulated statement in regard to what I have already stated, so that they may look through them and see for themselves the matters that have been dealt with by the Amalgamated Society on behalf of the men employed in the workshops. The great difficulty, it appears to me, has been narrowed down to about three or four matters. One is the question of remuneration, another is the question of apprentices, and the third has been mentioned by Mr. McDougall—namely, the question of tradesmen working in the running-sheds and dirt-money. A fourth has been mentioned in a circular to members of Parliament with reference to the remuneration earned by junior labourers and apprentices, and a fifth by the representative of the tradesmen who said that the constitution was the difficulty. The list I propose to hand in deals with the following: 1911 Amendment Act, 6d. per day increase; 1912 Amendment Act, 6d. per day increase; 1916 war bonus, 1s. per day increase; each day's work to stand by itself in workshops for overtime purposes; carpenters supplied with tools; first-class pass after ten years' service; holiday leave extended from seven to ten days, and if over ten years' service thirteen days; retiring-leave; and fortnightly payment of wages in shops in Department's time. I have not referred to the war bonus of 1s. per day because that will come in with regard to another matter. Now, sir, in 1914 the tradesmen met and approached the executive council, and the petition as placed before the executive council read as follows:—

Wellington, 6th August, 1914.

The Executive Council, Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, Wellington.

Sirs,—

The undersigned are tradesmen employed in the New Zealand Railways. We respectfully beg to make application for an increase of wages to 1s. 8d. per hour, and would earnestly call your attention to the following reasons why our request should be granted:—

1. That our work requires skill and involves responsibility comparatively greater than is expected from any other employees of the Second Division.
2. That in order to become efficient tradesmen have not only to serve an apprenticeship covering several years at a nominal wage, but have to give much time outside ordinary working-hours to the study of subjects connected with their various trades.
3. There is no encouragement given to young mechanics to perfect their trade; a large proportion of workshop apprentices do not find it worth their while to pursue courses of study with a view to become efficient tradesmen.
4. That the present remuneration to tradesmen is inadequate is proved by the fact that a large number of tradesmen leave the service for the purpose of improving their position.