

blishing a method which will be fair to all parties, to request your society to appoint a local secretary or agent in Wanganui with power to attend the Magistrate in connection with applications for under-rate permits. Though this will not be a strict compliance with the award, it will probably be found to operate satisfactorily. The matter is an urgent one, as applications for these permits may be made at any time. Will you therefore let me know what your society thinks of the matter as soon as possible, and oblige,

“Yours faithfully,

“J. MACKAY,

For the Chief Inspector.”

This shows to the Committee the difficulties we are presented with in regard to these under-rate-paid men in country towns where we are not represented. What we should like is a clause inserted in the Bill providing that these permits shall only be granted to men who are unable through old age or other infirmities to earn the minimum wage. At present men from any other trade or calling can obtain a permit from a Magistrate in a country district to work at under-rates, while competent carpenters are walking the street and cannot get employment. The following is a list of permits issued, which was obtained by my society through the Labour Department:—

Place where issued.	By Chairman Conciliation Board or Stipendiary Magistrate.	By Union Secretary.	Period.	Total.
Auckland	62	3	1906-9	65
Gisborne	103	1905-7	103
New Plymouth	7	...	1904-5	7
Wanganui	28	...	1904-7	28
Masterton	11	63	1903-7	74
Wellington	5	...	1906-7	5
Napier	6	1907	6
Palmerston North	8	4	1905-7	12
Nelson	19	61	1905-7	80
Christchurch	1	15	1904-7	16
Dunedin	105	16	1904-7	115
Invercargill	12	...	1905	12
Oamaru	1	8	1907	9
Timaru	Employers and union	5	1907	5
Totals	259	278	...	537

It will be seen that there is a marked difference in the number issued in Wellington—namely, five—where we have a paid secretary to look after our interests, and we wish to stop the large number being issued in other places on account of the injury it is doing to the trade. It will be noticed that Gisborne ranges very high, simply because a man who had obtained a permit at one time could not obtain work unless he had one. Employers demanded from all strangers if they had permits; if not, the employers requested them to go to the secretary and obtain them, so that they could work at less than the minimum rate. In fact, it was simply trading upon this system. I do not think for one moment Parliament ever intended that the provision for the issue of permits should be abused in the way in which it has been abused since its inception.

6. You show that permits have been granted in large numbers in comparatively small towns?—That is so, indiscriminately.

7. While in the large towns the number granted is very small?—Yes, in proportion.

8. And that in those towns where building operations have been very brisk during the last few years an exceptional number of permits have been granted?—That is so.

9. Will you tell us how it is you have not a branch of your society or an agent to represent your society in those places?—The reason is that it is only since 1904 that we got permission to extend our operations to the country districts. Our constitution would not allow my committee the distribution of the funds to establish representatives where we had no branches.

10. Permission from whom?—We are an international organization, and our funds were only made available for this purpose by the Executive Council of the society at the head office in Manchester.

11. Owing to the constitution of your society it was impossible to get any representation in the places you refer to?—Yes, because we had not the funds with which to establish an organizer until our rules were amended in 1904.

12. What proposal have you to make? Who are these people who are continually getting permits? Are they old people of your trade whose best energies have decreased by advancing years?—No, we make no objection to any applicant of that kind, but we do take exception to drapers and blacksmiths, and men who have not had any previous knowledge of the trade, obtaining a permit to work at the trade to the injury of our own members. In fact, we have applications from all classes and conditions of men: there was a jockey who applied at Wanganui to work at no more than 4s. a day. He applied for a permit, and obtained it because there was no opposition to its issue; and in many cases applications are made through a solicitor.

13. But he was not a member of your union?—No. We have very few members of our union working under permits. We have only a few old men, and the provision in the Act was intended for these only, I maintain.