

tive of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. They put the resolution to the meeting in Taihape, and it was lost—they would not pass any resolution. All this just shows that the executive of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants are not representatives of the locomotive-men at all, and when a thousand of the men have joined our union it shows that they have no confidence in them whatever. Now, respecting the friction which it is claimed sectional associations will cause, I may say there is no friction at all in America and England, where these organizations exist, and the same thing applies to Scotland. The ill feeling is always caused by the agitations of general secretaries of A. S. R. S. In Australia they work in perfect harmony, and in Victoria, New South Wales, and Western Australia. Even in Tasmania, where they have only about 120 locomotive-men, they have their own special organization. The recognition of our union will have no injurious effect upon the Amalgamated Society at all. It is claimed by them that, if we are granted a union, the guards will then want a union of their own. I have no doubt they will; and, if the Amalgamated Society cannot prove to them that it is more beneficial to them to remain in the Amalgamated Society, then they should be allowed to have their own union. If they find that the Amalgamated Society is not properly looking after their interests, they should be allowed to have their own organization.

Mr. G. W. RUSSELL, M.P., examined. (No. 5.)

*The Chairman:* Will you now address the Committee, Mr. Russell?

*Witness:* Yes, sir. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I will only detain you for a few minutes. I should like, in the first place, to quote the clause in the Arbitration and Conciliation Act which stands in the way of official recognition of the Engine-drivers' Union. It is section 121 of "The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, 1908," and the essential clause is this: "The Minister of Railways may from time to time enter into industrial agreements with the registered society in like manner in all respects as if the management of the Government Railways were an industry, and he were the employer of all workers employed therein." I should like to explain to the Committee that there is not in the Railways Act, or in any other Act dealing with the management of the railways, anything that gives the Amalgamated Society such a status, and which prevents the Minister from officially recognising any other union. The only reference to it is in this section of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act, the subsection of which I have just read to you; and under that Act the Minister has never made any industrial agreement with the Amalgamated Society. He has never been asked to do so, and he himself has never moved to have such an industrial agreement made; so that what the petitioners are asking is that, as the Minister is advised that this subsection of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act stands in the way of official recognition of the Engine-drivers' Union, an amendment should be brought in that would put the Minister in the position of being able to give official recognition if in the interests of the country he determines that that should be done. Now, so far as I am personally concerned, I have no feeling in connection with this matter at all. Some of my constituents are members of the Engine-drivers' Union, and I had the matter brought under my notice by them, and I say that, where a large body of men, whether in the Government service or any other service, desire to form a union, I do not think that on a technicality they should be prevented from doing so if they consider that by doing so they can improve their position. I fully recognise that the Amalgamated Society has in days past been the means of doing a great deal of good for the railway-men, and I myself, in former years, when I was Chairman of this Committee, have received every assistance in seeking to get and in obtaining concessions from the Government both in regard to wages and in other respects. But what I believe to be the case is that the Railway service has grown so enormously during the last ten or fifteen years, and there are so many different interests to be considered, that it is almost impossible for one association to adequately devote the time and attention that are necessary to the proper understanding and safeguarding of the interests of the whole of the men that are involved in it. I understand that there are some sixty or seventy different callings and occupations in the Railway service, and there are, I believe, about thirteen thousand men employed. Now, it must be a tremendous undertaking for one body, having its headquarters in one of the cities of New Zealand, to be able to deal adequately with the whole of the interests arising from so vast a body of men. There is one other matter I will venture to bring before you. By far the largest proportion of the Railway servants are the men who are receiving comparatively small rates of wages—platelayers, porters, shunters, &c. All these together form an enormous proportion of the staff. For example, you have been told that out of the whole of the Railway service there are only some fourteen hundred who are eligible to come into this union, which includes the whole of the locomotive branch, including the drivers, firemen, and cleaners; and you can easily understand that, if the total that they can claim out of the thirteen thousand Railway servants is only fourteen hundred, they are only a small minority of the total of the service. The large majority of the men are the men who are getting 6s. and 8s. a day. Now, I have publicly expressed the opinion, and I do it again without any hesitation, that the man who is capable of running our big express trains, such, for instance, as are running between Christchurch and Dunedin, and Wellington and Auckland—I say that a man who is competent to do that, and who has perhaps the lives of from five hundred to a thousand persons in his hands—I say the idea that that man is paid fairly and adequately at 12s. 6d. a day is absolutely absurd. In any other walk of life will you find men engaged in such responsible duties who would be considered to be adequately paid at 12s. 6d. a day? I say you will find no other position where you can get men to take such a responsibility and consider that that pay is adequate. The position is this: These men happen to be the highest-paid men in the Railway service, and the large body of men say to themselves, "These men are better paid than we are, therefore why should we fight to get their salaries raised when we are only getting our 6s. or 8s. or 9s. a day, while they are getting 12s. 6d.?" I believe that explains to