

Mr. M. J. MACK, General Secretary, Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, examined.
(No. 8.)

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

Witness: Yes, sir. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I personally take a somewhat different view as to the manner in which this question should be considered. It appears to me that it is not a question as to whether any certain section or grade of the Railway service should receive increased wages, as to whether they have had a decrease, or as to whether the conditions in New Zealand are equivalent to those in Australia, America, and in other countries. What this Committee has to consider is whether this new association shall receive official recognition from the Minister; and so far, sir, I contend that there has not been one single sentence spoken which will justify that being done. It has not been shown that there is any need or necessity for this organization representing locomotive-men, because it has not been shown that their interests have been neglected. On the other hand, we are prepared to prove that the Amalgamated Society has done its utmost when representing the locomotive-men. Take, for instance, the Bankside and Rotorua accidents. We provided them with counsel on those two occasions, which cost our society £227. Recently I have had to pay out twelve guineas in arranging for the defence of locomotive members who are involved in inquests and suchlike. A small society could not get the funds to do such a thing. Take, for instance, the Locomotive Association of South Australia. If you take their balance-sheet for last year you will find that the credit balance of that association was the sum of £10. And the largest association of Australia—that is, the Victorian Association—where they have 1,510 members—their balance-sheet for the end of last year was £46 some odd shillings. Now, sir, has anything been said to prove the statement that the Amalgamated Society has done nothing on behalf of the locomotive-men? I should like to refer you to the schedule of the demands made by our society in 1908. On that occasion the enginemmen, firemen, and cleaners' positions were pointed out, and, if our application was rejected, that was no fault of the Amalgamated Society. If you peruse that schedule I think you will admit that every grade of the service received every attention at the hands of the society. With regard now to representation: The enginemmen, firemen, and cleaners have always had more than their fair share of representation on conferences, as evidenced by the fact that no less than eight enginemmen were elected to the 1908 conference—coming from Invercargill, Dunedin, Oamaru, Christchurch, Cross Creek, Dannevirke, Palmerston North, and Wanganui—as against six Traffic, five Shops, one Maintenance; and the executive council now consists of five enginemmen, three Traffic, 1 Shops, giving a balance of power to the Locomotive branch of the service, which has the least cause for complaint in this direction. The Minister has said that he can only recognise one society on behalf of the locomotive-men. We at present legally hold that right. The petitioners desire to deprive us of the right, and therein lies the cause of our objection, and until it is shown that we have neglected them or abused that right, we as a society strongly resent and protest against any alteration. To grant official recognition and alter the Act would mean that the great majority of the locomotive-men who are loyal to our society would be *compelled* to join such society against their will so as to obtain representation, which step they are opposed to, as evidenced by the voluntary request attached to the resolutions of our society from over the whole Dominion. It cannot be denied that all railwaymen's interests are identical, the safety of the public being their first and most important duty, and it cannot be in the interests of the public or of the men themselves that there should be a conflict of feeling among the men in the service; and I attribute the almost total absence of accident in the Railway service to the fact that there has been a good feeling and a common interest among the men employed. To separate them into sections would be wrong. It would be as reasonable to say that the interest of the dairy-farmer was not the interest of the grazier, and the interest of the grazier not that of the cropper, and that each should have a separate union of his own. I think that would be an absurd position. Finally, it is contrary to the true spirit of unionism and contrary to the principle advocated by the present Government, and absolutely detrimental to the best interests of the men as a whole. Our membership has been referred to. We have been told that our membership has gone back—that members are leaving the society. I may tell you our society is and has been growing ever since I have taken office, and to-day we have about six thousand five hundred members throughout New Zealand. Although the petitioners state that the men are seceding from us I do not think that we have lost more than a hundred members of the Locomotive department altogether. Now, sir, summarised, our objections are these:—

Memorandum of Reasons submitted by the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants for Rejection of the Prayer of the Petition of the Engine-drivers, Firemen, and Cleaners' Union.

(1.) The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants has existed since 1886, and constitutes one organization for the benefit of Railway servants.

(2.) The rules and regulations of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants have always been and are sufficiently wide to permit of any person employed in the Railway service becoming a member thereof.

(3.) The objects of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, as set out in the society's constitution, show that the society is constituted for the benefit of all Railway servants alike.

(4.) The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants is a strong organization which is much better able to guard and promote the interests of Railway servants as a whole than a number of separate societies would be able to do.