

3. What proof has this Committee got that those ballot-papers were actually handed to each man, that each man got only one copy of the ballot-paper, and that each man voted on his own account?—I cannot bring absolute proof about each man, but the instructions sent out were that the secretaries were to put a ballot-paper into every tradesman's hands where he could do so, because we wished as an executive to get the opinion of the tradesmen in the service as to whether our organization should be a separate organization or not. We wanted the separate opinion of the tradesmen in the service.

4. *The Chairman.*] Has your society been registered as a society?—No, sir.

5. Have you applied to the Department for official recognition?—No, sir.

(Close of evidence.)

*Mr. McDougall.*] Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, in summing up the evidence which has been given before the Committee I wish to say on behalf of the New Zealand Railway Tradesmen's Association that my intention was to make as brief a reply as possible, but much matter has been introduced into this discussion which is irrelevant to the business in hand, and I am compelled to take up more of your time than I intended. To begin with, I feel it my duty to emphasize this fact: that we have no quarrel whatever with the Department as our opponents have inferred, and so tried to place us in a false position. Our quarrel is simply and solely with the A.S.R.S. and their treatment of us. The climax was reached, as I have already stated, when they absolutely refused to place our remits before the Department. Now, gentlemen, these remits are to us tradesmen most important and essential, and we shall never swerve from the position we hold. It is not a matter of wages or anything pertaining to wages, but the right to defend and protect our trades, and they have given no reason why we should be denied that right. We have heard more than enough of that cry of equal opportunity for all. We do not deny this right. But what we are opposed to, and will oppose, is unequal opportunity which is being claimed for the unskilled by our opponents. A nasty and sarcastic remark was made by Mr. Mack—viz., that he always thought that nobody but a tradesman could do a tradesman's work, but now he understood that any one could. I want to meet that remark with a flat denial. Any one cannot do tradesman's work, but any one can try. This remark of his is a sure indication of their feelings towards us. I know that there are tradesmen, members of the A.S.R.S., who hold the same views as I have expressed on this apprenticeship question, and who have not signed our petition. Now, these are men who do not realize that unless we fight for our rights we shall never get them at the hands of the A.S.R.S., and that through time, according to their method of working, we will be absorbed into the ranks of the unskilled. The question has been asked, Have we the right to dictate to the Department *re* whom they shall employ? Certainly not. Have the A.S.R.S. the right to dictate on any matter to the Department that which they want? But we ask the right to negotiate in the same way as they negotiate with the Department. They have admitted that it is quite possible for a labourer to represent us according to their rules. Let it not be forgotten, gentlemen, we are out for direct representation, and this the A.S.R.S. are combating to deny us. The apprenticeship question is the crux of the position. They say they are not in favour of the abolition of the apprenticeship, but their actions and speeches, especially in recent times, would easily lead one to believe they that were. They do not deny that the great majority of tradesmen are anxious to protect their trades, but it seems to me they are doing their level best to prevent us from protecting our trades by standing between us and the Department. We claim that this is not a matter for the A.S.R.S. to decide, we cannot keep them from opposing us, but what we object to is their denying us the right of putting our own case before the Department. As I said before, this is a serious question, and is being discussed and treated with deep concern throughout the English-speaking world. A statement has been made that, should any one who is employed as a tradesman at the present be dispensed with, our rules would debar that tradesman (providing the Department agreed to us) from again entering the service. We have stated again and again that this is not our intention and never has been so. It was because of the possibility of such a thing happening that we so framed that rule, and we believe that the wording of that rule makes the position quite clear. As has been said before, these rules were made when it was our intention and desire to work in and through the A.S.R.S., as must be plainly evident by the amount of our subscriptions. We are at one with our opponents on this point, that indentures or papers only do not make a tradesman in the fuller sense of the word, and are not sufficient qualifications. Ability must be taken into consideration. But on that point we leave it to the Department to exercise their prerogative. Our claim is that if we have gone to the trouble to serve an apprenticeship we are entitled to protection, and that claim is generally recognized throughout the Empire. Much, very much has been said to combat the statement of ours that we feared we would have to follow the A.S.R.S. should an understanding be come to between them and the waterside workers. Now I contend, sir, that our inference was a fair one, being the result of reading their article in the *Review* entitled "The Wages Crisis," and later on reading the report of the conference that took place between the A.S.R.S. and the waterside workers *re* the suggestion of forming a transport workers' union. I fully expected that Mr. Hampton would place on the table for the perusal of you gentlemen a copy of that interview, and I now invite him to do so. You have heard from both sides regarding our ballot, so that can safely be left without further comment. I am glad that Mr. Mack has given you a copy of the verbatim report of what took place when we met the executive of A.S.R.S. in May of last year. An assertion was made by Mr. Hampton that our argument when speaking on the matter of an increase was that we wanted an increase owing to the higher cost of living. That assertion of his is not correct, and the report will bear this out. Mr. Hampton also says, "I believe that this seeking for recognition is the outcome of the Department turning down outside unions." I deny this emphatically. To be quite candid, I have been taken to task over this by a prominent official of one of these outside unions. Now, sir, I will say that if Mr. Hampton will prove that statement of his to me, instead of making vague