

forced on them by the unions; and, gentlemen, it is useless to put the blame on anything else. Now, let me put the matter in this way: We are all ready to support a certain degree of unionism; we all supported the Dockers' Union at Home. We all, capitalists more than labourers, gave money to help that Union. It was so successful in carrying out its object that a wave of unionism came along and excited such a state of feeling that the unions in these colonies banded together to try conclusions—with what? They did not know themselves. Is not that, I appeal to you, a true statement of the case? Did the employers ever lift a finger against the unions before they were attacked themselves? Take the Shipowners' Association, which has been hit at by the speakers on behalf of the unions. Did it ever lift a finger before it was attacked? The shipowners in Australia were running in each other's trades, cutting each other's throats in competition, but when this trouble arose they came together like a clap of thunder. And for what? — Self-preservation. They must either have submitted to be ruined, or defend themselves. That was the position. They were not fighting the unions. The officers had made a demand on them, and, mind you, there was no need for any quarrel to come out of it. This demand, made by impulsive officers, brought on the whole thing. And that is what you have to fear in all unions—impulsive leaders. Had they allowed the men and owners to come together a basis of some amicable settlement might have been arrived at. But these impulsive leaders came between them, and there was no longer any way of coming to an understanding. I will say this for the Union Company and the men in their employment, that whenever they have met face to face they have always found the means of settling differences amicably until this time. Our board of directors have always acted in unison, as one man, in listening to reason and remedying grievances whenever they found any to exist. We always did our best to maintain peace and settle all differences in a friendly spirit. Now, Mr. Sandford has made a good speech, a very fair and proper speech. It was a speech framed upon the ground of ameliorating the condition of the men and trying to keep labour at a fair price. But unionism, riding on its high horse, as it came along went far in excess of that. With the greater part of Mr. Sandford's speech I have no fault to find; but if the unions were reasonable many industries might be kept going and good employment given to labour, thus preventing goods from other countries where labour is more plentiful coming in to compete with them. With regard to the employers not coming here, I do not say that there is much to blame them for. They had no quarrel with you, and they have, most of them, taken back any men they had room for. I am not acquainted with any employer who has refused to take back any man who left his service, if there was a place vacant. Of course, as has been very well put, there is a certain class of employers who have no great sympathy with their men. But they are not all alike; there are, no doubt, a few bad employers as well as bad unionists; but that is no reason why you should attack all the good ones. Now, gentlemen, to come to the question of whose fault it was that this strike came to New Zealand. I have complimented the officers of the unions here on trying to prevent its coming to New Zealand. But in almost every speech that has been brought against me it is implied that I confessed it was we who brought it here. Now, gentlemen, I made no such confession, and I put it to the delegates who have been in Sydney to say if the state of things was not such there that it was utterly impossible things could go on as they were much longer. How could we afford to pay 2s. 3d. a ton for the discharge of our steamers? The men would work as they liked, and refused to obey their officers, who lost control of them. In fact, the position had become such that it was necessary to do something to meet it. The men had come to an agreement with the owners to work for a certain period,—a year, I think,—but declined to discharge two of our ships because one of themselves was put to oversee the work done. And that man was a union man, not one of the others. They said it was "sweating." Then the Seamen's Union brought along what they called a "slate," or a revision of the rules, and made a further demand. Thus was demand after demand made, until the shipowners said they could not stand anything more. I said to the officers of the union here that that was a state of things which was bound to be put a stop to. I do not think they wanted to press it here, but the representatives of the Seamen's Union who went to Sydney argued very strongly for it at the Conference. That is all we know. Even then, to try and give way on certain things, I myself telegraphed to our manager in Sydney to ask the shipowners there to give way to a certain extent. They then offered to compromise and give way so much, but the Seamen's Union would not agree to withdraw from their position. They withdrew from the Conference, and told the owners they would take steps to bring the increase into force. It is easy to bring forward the eight hours' labour movement as a hobby to ride on. But what does this eight-hours movement for the Seamen's Union mean? It meant this: that the seaman was to do no work in the daytime when in port without pay. You may put it how you like, but that is what the revision of the rules really meant. It is useless to say it was not. What was meant was that a man should keep his watch of four hours at night and four hours in the morning, but should do no work in the daytime. Was it judicious, at a time like that, when trade was bad, when shipowners were losing money like water pouring out of a bucket, to set up such demands? Was that a time to take advantage of the employers and to bring about a crisis? I say this solemnly—that it was the labour party, determining to try their strength, who brought on this crisis. The Shipowners' Association up to that time had not raised a finger to attack them in any way. The whole thing came upon them like a clap of thunder. They were bound to take measures for their protection, and they came together in their own defence. The Conference at Albury was held some time after the men were out. That was a conference of employers. No doubt they agreed then and there to stand by each other, in the same way as the employers in New Zealand were forced to stand by each other. But the employers then had no union of their own here. It was suddenly forced on them by the strike. The cargo from our steamers in Sydney could not be discharged. The lumpers refused to discharge it. Then the crews refused to obey their officers, and the union men were taken out of the ship. It is useless for Mr. Millar to say that the crews could have taken the cargo out and put it in the stores. It was not possible under the excitement, and they might have been pulled to pieces before they got it into the