

board the ships by the affiliation of the officers. That has never been dealt with, nor is it likely to be dealt with, because I fail to see how any person could bring an argument forward to support such a contention. The only argument is that it has not taken place before and should not do so now, and there is no argument in that; and the best way out of it is to go on for six or twelve months, and if at the end of that time it is found to be a fact that the officers' affiliation with the Maritime Council is detrimental to the maintenance of discipline on board the ships, the officers will be the first to say "We will leave." Do you mean to say that the officers cannot look after themselves, and will not maintain discipline? It is most childish to talk to us in such a way. I would like to have it clearly explained to me if it is detrimental. Mr. McLean has not taken that side, because he has always admitted that he has seen no objection to it; and I honestly believe he has ventured to do his best to get the other shipowners on the other side to see it in the same light. But unfortunately they have not seen it in the same light. If they could, there would be no difficulty. If we settled our difficulty here all right, and had looked at it in a reasonable way, they would settle it over there. They thought fit in their wisdom to ride the high horse, and would not settle it, and there has been a heavy loss to employers and employed throughout the whole colony, and a loss which is likely to be much larger before any settlement is come to. If they would only settle this point, that the officers shall have the right and freedom to affiliate with any other body, the trouble would be ended to-morrow. Upon other matters we are quite prepared to confer with Mr. McLean at once, but that one principle generally must be admitted. They have admitted the right of the individual to join a society, and they cannot deny the right of the society to affiliate itself with any one else, because it is the extension of the principle. If they can admit that, then I say there is a hope of a settlement. As Mr. McLean has kindly said he is quite prepared to meet any person to discuss the matter with the object of coming to a settlement, it would perhaps be best for three or four members of this Conference to be deputed to talk the matter over with him, to see if there is any prospect of a settlement. We do not want to sit here a week going over the same old ground, and if Mr. McLean thinks there is a prospect of a settlement being come to we would stay any length of time, to see if we could not come to some arrangement, because I believe we are all honest in our intention to get this dispute settled at the earliest possible date, and I trust when we both go back to Dunedin we shall be in a position to say it is actually settled, or that we are in a fair way of settling it at an early date. If this proposal should meet with the approval of Mr. McLean, and the other delegates, I would suggest that at the conclusion of this day's sitting we should appoint, say, three or four delegates to meet Mr. McLean, and see if there is any possibility of the employers giving way upon any point, and any possibility also of our giving way on any point, and thereby coming to a settlement of the whole question. I think, gentlemen, I have gone sufficiently into the matter, and if I have said anything which has given offence to Mr. McLean I would assure him that it was not done intentionally. Personally, I have simply defended our side from certain statements made, and in doing so I have stated some hard facts; but still I feel that it is better at a time like this to tell the truth straight out—(Hear, hear)—because, if we speak out straightforwardly, no matter if it gives offence or not, we are more likely to come to a settlement.

*Mr. Boase* : I cannot allow Mr. Millar to lie under the stigma of having misstated a thing, when it is in my power to affirm his statement, although I do not believe that Mr. McLean would intentionally impute misstatement to Mr. Millar. I have no doubt whatever in my own mind that Mr. McLean thoroughly believes that no boat left Greymouth without being able to get coals; but I can name several boats.

*The Chairman* : He did not say that a single boat had not left.

*Mr. Boase* : It does not matter how many. I understood Mr. McLean to contradict Mr. Millar, and to say that no boats had left.

*A Delegate* : No; three.

*The Chairman* : It was only as to number.

*Mr. Boase* : Then that settles the question. No one is more ready to yield in a misunderstanding than myself. I took it to mean that no boats had left Greymouth without coals, or, if they did, that they could get coals at Westport; and Mr. Millar asked why, if there was no agreement that boats should leave Greymouth without coals. It would seem that there was an agreement, and while that agreement was preserved unbroken the boats belonging to the Union Steamship Company had to leave Greymouth without coals while there was some 800 or 1,000 tons lying by the side of the boats, on the wharf.

*Hon. Mr. McLean* : I should like to say, as to the question of the boats, that under ordinary circumstances some do leave Greymouth without coal, and take it at Westport. I did not say that no boats left in this way. But Mr. Millar said a dozen had, and I do not believe a dozen have been there since the strike altogether. I am not, however, going to take any notice of these exaggerated statements. But I do protest against Mr. Millar insinuating that those false discharges came from the Union Company. It is monstrous for a man like him to say that a respectable company would lend itself to such a thing. I could not sit here without contradicting such a statement that any one connected with us would ever dare do such a thing.

*Mr. Millar* : I did not make a direct assertion against the Union Steamship Company. I said it occurred to me that it was impossible for any one man to hold such a quantity of discharges as a cigar-box full, and there were only three sources from which they could have come. I did not imply that the Union Steamship Company had given them—they might not have given a single discharge; but I know a number of discharges get into the company's offices through men leaving them, and the foreign consuls get discharges through men running away, and I know also that the Customhouse gets a lot of them, and no individual person occupying that position, as I have stated, could have had so many discharges in his possession as those men had if they had not come from some official source.

*Mr. Ansell* : I should like to make a few remarks in answer to statements of Mr. McLean this