

According to ships' articles, if a man who was incompetent signed articles the master could reduce his wages. But he did not want the company to deal with the matter in that way. If they got their old hands back they would save the great difference which was shown by the above quotation. If the worst should come to the worst, and the union men had to seek employment elsewhere, the employers might rest assured that would be the means of building up unions of a strength which unions had never attained before. Some of the men had gone to the country, some had been thrown back on the towns. But all the trouble and suffering that might yet ensue would have been brought about by the company. Unions would become stronger; new men would take the place of the old hands; and those who had to go into the country would bring about unionism of a new type in the country districts. The Union Company might gain a victory now, but it would cost them dearly hereafter. A severer struggle than ever the present one was expected to reach would certainly take place in the future.

*Mr. Dobson* thought the position taken up by the unionists was unassailable by the capitalists. A union was an organization intended for the benefit of its members. What was the Union Company but a large organization existing for the benefit of those who contributed by taking shares? It was to be regretted that a satisfactory conclusion had not been come to. He believed the worst consequences of the struggle would be felt by the importers and employers of labour. They would yet see ruin staring them in the face through the way they were now treating the unions. If the delegates had refused to allow any margin for adjustment of differences *Mr. McLean* might have been justified in taking up the position he had assumed. If no settlement were to be made after all these delegates coming to try and settle the dispute a new movement would surely arise. The working-men were the wrong sort to be crushed; they might be compelled to retire from the struggle for a time, but they would persevere. They would not in the long-run submit to the dictation of employers in matters concerning the protection and preservation of their trade-rights. Non-union men should have no privileges for obtaining that which unionism had contributed its money to so freely. He would support the basis of settlement which had been read to *Mr. McLean*.

*Mr. Lomas*: I think if we talk for a week we shall not get nearer the point. I therefore think we must close this Conference. I am sorry we cannot get nearer to a settlement. If the men of the unions decline absolutely to work with non-union men the matter is done with. I think we ought to propose a vote of thanks to the Chairman. I shall therefore move a vote of thanks to the Chairman.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: I shall second the motion. I am perfectly satisfied that *Mr. Fisher* has conducted the business of this meeting in an impartial manner. He has been a good Chairman. I think the thanks of the Conference are due to him. It is true he has not had much trouble to manage us, but he has shown much tact and judgment. I second the vote of thanks to the Chairman.

*The Chairman*: I am rather sorry I got into this position, for it has prevented me giving my views on the main question that has been discussed. I may be allowed to take this opportunity to say why the result of the Conference is as it is. I submit that the Union Company have not given way in the slightest respect. I think if any uninterested person were to go into the whole matter he would agree with those who say that the labour party have given way a good deal. It surely cannot be said that we have not understood the issue. Now, it has become a question whether you will have unions or not. I conceive that all the trades are now bound to come together and consider the position. When you find that the whole of the trades of the colony are forced into prolonging the struggle it is hard to see what is to be the outcome of it. Even yet I hope some means may be found to bring about a settlement, for I believe the struggle has now really begun. Many unionists have a foggy idea that they have been alienated. I will even still indulge in the hope that some basis of agreement will be arrived at, if not this one which we have been discussing.

*Mr. Meyer*: I would ask, as a matter of order, whether a report from this Conference, with evidence, should not be forwarded to the Government, and they would say whether they think the Conference should be closed, or whether some other basis of arrangement could not be found.

*The Chairman*: I shall willingly consult the Premier as to what steps we should take in the matter.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: I have pressing engagements, and I hope you will not blame me if I am not present at your adjourned meeting. I have a great dislike to allow any uncertainty or doubt about the actual position.

*Mr. Meyer*: I was going to move the adjournment of this Conference until to-morrow. I have felt all along that it was a difficulty that only one company was represented here. I think the thanks of the Conference are due to *Mr. McLean* for the manner in which he has conducted this matter on behalf of his company. We cannot, of course, agree with his views. There has been nothing for the labour party to say; and, so far as the Trades and Labour Councils are concerned, they have had no opportunity of saying anything. If the delegates were to hold another meeting it might be found that the outcome of it would be more satisfactory.

*Mr. J. A. Millar*: In my opinion, so far as the Conference is concerned, it is closed. The delegates, of course, can meet if they wish, and if they wish to confer with employers they can do so.

At 12.30 p.m. the Conference adjourned until 10 a.m. next day.