

TUESDAY, 7TH OCTOBER, 1890.

The Conference assembled at 10 o'clock.

*Present* : Mr. Ansell, Mr. Brown, Mr. Browett, Mr. Boase, Mr. Cornish, Mr. Dobson, Mr. Elvines, Mr. Fisher (Chairman), Captain Highman, Mr. Hoban, Mr. Hutcheson, Mr. Lomas, Mr. Meyer, Mr. J. A. Millar, Mr. F. C. Millar, Mr. Mills, Mr. Sandford, Mr. Tees, Mr. Williams, Mr. Winter.

*The Chairman* : We adjourned yesterday to this morning, although with no definite object. In conversation with several members since then, I find there is an opinion that there should be a further adjournment. We came to the conclusion that it would not be wise to close this Conference absolutely—that it would be better to adjourn indefinitely, in the hope that some means might yet be found of settling this question. When I say this I should also state that I am not speaking of the Conference as a whole. Some members may have other matters to bring before the delegates. It might therefore seem desirable that we should not close the Conference. I shall receive the motion if any member chooses to move to that effect.

*Mr. J. A. Millar* : I am desirous that the whole of the delegates should give their opinion as to the desirability of establishing a National Trades and Labour Council for New Zealand. I do not know that such a question requires any great amount of discussion to recommend it. But I think it would be well to have an expression of opinion from the Conference that the time is ripe for the establishment of such an institution. It may be some time before we shall have delegates from all the trades in New Zealand assembled together again. I should like, therefore, to get their opinion, either by vote or otherwise, on this question. I need hardly point out that in all labour institutions it is essential there should be a central controlling body. That such an institution could be worked effectually for the benefit of labour and the colony there can be no doubt. Judging by the signs of the times, it appears to me that the present time is ripe for the initiation of such a National Council, to which questions connected with trade and labour might be referred. I move, "That this Conference affirms the desirability of establishing a National Trades and Labour Council for New Zealand."

*Mr. Sandford* : I have much pleasure in seconding the motion, believing that, so far as trades and labour councils are concerned, the time has arrived for the organization of such a national council.

*Mr. Winter* : Would it not be well to let us know something of the constitution of such a body?

*Mr. J. A. Millar* : As to the nature and constitution of such a body, that subject would come on for discussion as part of the initiatory steps to be taken for its establishment. But I may state generally the heads of the proposal. They are: that the Maritime Council as it exists should continue; that two delegates from each local trades council in New Zealand should have a seat in it. It is proposed to have a permanent executive, who would be paid and remain in office, so as to devote the whole of their time to the work. Of course, these are matters of detail, but the whole scheme is in readiness to be submitted to the next meeting of the Maritime Council, and, if approved by them, it would be submitted to the various trades councils for their approval. And further, as the Maritime Council meets in November there will be time for each of the trades councils to send any suggestion they think proper as to the proposal and its objects. If we should have, in time, all the suggestions of the trades councils we would be in a position to come to a definite decision. I do not feel inclined to go into the whole of the details at present.

Motion agreed to.

*Mr. J. A. Millar* : I have information that the Railway Commissioners are carrying on the dismissal of the officers of the Railway Servants' Association wholesale. They appear to be singling out the officers of these associations more especially. I feel very strongly on this point. In thus singling out the officers the Commissioners are making a determined attempt to crush those associations. If the associations are going to stand this sort of thing they are not the men I take them for. If we cannot get justice from the Press we will attempt to enforce justice by ourselves. I think it is a disgrace to the Ministers that they should stand by and see such things done. If the Commissioners are not the servants of the public, whose servants are they? If the public have no control over them, who has? I think that a deputation ought to be appointed to wait on the Commissioners or the Government to see if anything can be done to stop this injustice. It is certainly a singular thing that the officers of the associations should be selected for dismissal in this way.

*Mr. Ansell* : That is simply a part of the old tactics of employers. It was so in the Old Country. It is nothing else than a system of picketing men and discharging them, not because they are not competent workmen, but because they belong to their associations. It is a fine thing for the Commissioners to say, "We want to shorten the number of hands and save expense." It is done for no other purpose but because these men have been holding positions in their trade bodies. I hold that the Commissioners should be answerable to the public for this sort of thing. It should be laid before the country, who would then know the way in which the Commissioners are acting. If they are left alone at this no one will dare to take office in any of these associations: if these men who have been dismissed are to be sacrificed no one will think it safe to hold such an office in any trade society.

*Mr. Sandford* : I should be prepared to move in this direction: "That this Conference regret very much the action of the Commissioners in discharging Mr. J. Newton, an employé at Hillside Workshops, who is also president of the local branch of the Railway Servants' Society, such discharge being suggestive of a desire on the part of the Commissioners to disorganize the society, and being contrary to the pledge given that no man should be marked for taking a prominent part in the working of the society; and that a deputation be appointed to interview the Commissioners on the subject, and, failing that, lay the matter before the Premier: the deputation to consist of Mr. Lomas, Mr. Sandford, Mr. Winter, and Mr. Fisher." I feel that the position which arises here is