

us, if they think proper to return to us. We will do what is fair and just to all alike. I think, at the same time, it is fair and right that an employer should have control of his own establishment. So far as this strike is concerned, we were most desirous it should not come into New Zealand, and at the beginning Mr. Millar himself worked with us in trying to keep it out of New Zealand. But the unions got us into this position: We could not get our ships discharged in Sydney. The wharf labourers were withdrawn from the wharves, and the crews also stopped work. After a remonstrance from the Seamen's Union here, the latter were allowed to go to work again, but were again meddled with by the unions in Sydney. We were then compelled to use what labour was available—which was non-union labour—to take the cargo from the wharves to the stores. This brought the seamen in contact with non-union labour, and they declined to work further, thus making it impossible for us to work without non-union men. Thereupon the Maritime Council gave us notice, and proceeded to call out all the men on our ships in New Zealand, and warned all the unions that they were not to work for us. Having done that, I believe the men—very sorrowfully in most cases—left their employment. I do not think that any of them willingly left us—they were called out, and they obeyed the call. What were we to do? We must either lie down and die, or set ourselves energetically to work to try and keep our boats going. We started then to man the ships with all the energy we could command, and the result is that now all our ships are running that we have trade for. I may tell you that we are doing now what we should have done before at this season of the year, had we not wished to suit the public convenience and keep all our men about us—namely, running boats fortnightly to Melbourne and Sydney, as you know people will not travel in the winter. We have got more officers coming back now than we can take, and more cooks and stewards than we can take. Our old seamen have not yet commenced to return, but there is no difficulty in manning the ships; and I may tell you that the flower of New Zealand—young men from twenty-two to twenty-eight years of age—are filling our boats a good deal as firemen and trimmers. Now, New Zealand should supply these, and I say that if the unions were conducted on proper lines New Zealand would do so. We do not grudge good pay, and there is no complaint that we have not paid fair wages. Take the average, which is £7 a month, and, in addition to that, there is an average of £1 14s. a month overtime. Thus you see there was on our part no stint as regards pay. Then, with regard to the officers: they made a demand for increased pay. I always thought that the third and fourth officers had not sufficient. But we made them satisfied, and I consider that the officers, of all men, should not have left us. They were the people who should have protected the owners' property. But we did not complain; we got other officers. But what we do feel most is this: that those trades that we have never quarrelled with, and who never have had any quarrel with us, should have behaved to us in the manner that some of them have done, and endeavour even to stop us getting bread and meat. Surely that was not a right thing to do by trades with whom we were never at variance. We were never at variance with any body of tradesmen, and we are not at variance with them now. I think they should have left us to fight our battle out. It is said that we, the Union Company, have a coal monopoly. Speaking for myself, I have not a single share in any coal-mine, and I do not think that many of the shareholders have. The Union Company has no interest in any coal-mine except a fourth in the Grey Valley Company, and that was taken more for the purpose of helping it along than that we should derive any profit from it. Our business is a carrying business; and that is the only coal-mine which as a company we have any interest in. Unfortunately, however, we got into that. But I must say that the position taken up by the miners there was most unjustifiable. We could not quietly stand by while they were saying they would give any one else coal but ourselves. We had no quarrel with the coal-miners; why should they have stopped us from getting our own coal? So far as the Grey Valley Mine is concerned, it is well known that the men were warned that if they insisted on a change in the mode of payment it would involve a loss. However, they did insist, and the mine lost £250 a week. Would any of you ask that the mine should go on with such a loss to the proprietors? You may call out about monopolies of coal-mines as you like, but the fact is that the money sunk in them has never been got out, and there is no profit out of them so far. We told the Grey miners that we could not go on in that way. They did not seem to credit what we told them, so we asked them to put their own accountant in to test the correctness of what we said. They did so. The result of the investigation by their own accountant was the same as we had told them. The mine was laid idle in order to give time to see what could be done. We said, "We will do anything you wish; we will work it on the co-operative principle with you, or you can contract to put the coal into the trucks at a certain price." Nothing came of this, and the men took their tools out. An arrangement was then come to to take a certain amount off the hewing rate, and the other employés about the mine would agree to a reduction in sympathy. The miners then went to work again, but they joined with others and refused to give us our own coal. We said we would have our own coal, and we took it, whereupon they struck. I think the demand made by the miners was most unreasonable. All business life should be on a give-and-take principle, so long as you find that proprietors do not want to grab more than their share. All my actions through life with my own men will show that my sympathies are with the employés. I have never had a quarrel with any of them yet; and I hold that the workmen should look at the actions and the lives of those who are supposed to guide them, and distinguish between those who have their real welfare at heart, and those who are simply goading them on to their own destruction for the sake of their votes. I am afraid, gentlemen, I have wearied you a bit.—(No, no.)—But I wish to hear from any of you any way of solving this difficulty. The country has been put to sore inconvenience; and if my coming here to talk over this matter is any good I consider that the time is well employed, although I must say at the same time there are certain things which, along with other employers, we cannot abandon. I think the main point is to arrive at such an agreement as will allow non-unionism and unionism to work together. You cannot deny to your fellow-beings the right to earn their living. With regard to the Seamen's or other unions