

present time makes very little difference to us, and I hope if the difficulty is settled the miners will be employed to the fullest extent, although I am frightened as in the case of Koranui, as in the case of the Tyneside and the Wallsend, that the Wallsend mines will be closed for any time the Union Steamship Company or the Grey Valley Coal Company think proper, and they will not think one single iota about the working-classes or their needs: they will think of their pockets and the dividends they will pay to shareholders when they open up the mines.

*The Chairman* : I should like to correct one thing in Mr. Ansell's statement. He said that Mr. McLean represented the Employers' Association; but Mr. McLean said that he simply represented the Union Company and the Northern Company, and I hope no other gentleman will make the same mistake.

*Mr. Ansell* : I beg leave to withdraw that statement.

*Mr. Boase* : There is one point I should like to make a remark upon in Mr. McLean's statement. No one, Sir, could but admire the childlike simplicity of the honourable gentleman while he was speaking; but, at the same time, while I know it would be unparliamentary for me to say that his statements were false, yet I may say they were incorrect, and liable to lead gentlemen who know nothing of the circumstances very much astray. He made the statement that the miners would not give the company their own coals. Now, some time before the present strike took place there was a lock-out at Brunnerton, because the company said they were losing so much per week, or fortnight, or per month. Apparently, however, they came to an amicable arrangement, and the lock-out was ended, and the men went to work again on certain conditions with the Grey Valley Coal Company, which really meant to a large extent also the Union Steamship Company. They went to work again after the matter was settled, and the condition was that when this strike occurred no coal was to be given to the Union Steamship Company. Mark this, gentlemen: The Grey Valley Coal Company gave the association in Brunnerton a written pledge to that effect—that no coal should be given during this struggle to the Union Steamship Company. Now, the Hon. George McLean asks why the miners should refuse to give them their own coal. I tell you there were 700 or 800 tons of coal brought down to Greymouth, and that company had determined to make a raid upon that coal, notwithstanding the pledge between the company and the association at Brunnerton, and you know a large number of constables were sworn in and a lot of extra police sent to the place. Now, Sir, I contend that coal was hewn by the miners while under this pledge, and therefore to a certain extent it was not the company's own coal: and I am sure Mr. McLean knows well, or should know, that there was a pledge given.

*Hon. Mr. McLean* : I should like to say that I never knew of any such pledge, and never would have been a party to it. I never heard of it.

*Mr. Boase* : Very well, I withdraw any expression as to bringing Mr. McLean within the knowledge of that pledge; but I most emphatically say that there was a pledge, and it was produced at a large public representative meeting at Greymouth, and read and published in the papers after the meeting. The pledge was distinct and clear, and the manager of the mine was present at the meeting, and could not refute the statement; nor could he say that no such pledge was given. There was the pledge and there were the signatures. The miners therefore say, and rightly so, that the coal hewn during that pledge should not have been taken, and that the company, when they felt inclined to break the pledge, should have come—if all the coal was going to companies other than the Union Company—and said, "Now, gentlemen, we find we are injured by the agreement we have made, and we intend to break that agreement." But they broke the agreement on the coal which was hewn by the miners while under this pledge. I should like to make that known, because it is true and irrefutable. Then, there is another remark Mr. McLean made, that they had no difficulty in manning their ships. Why, if all were so accustomed to travel as many of us by the ships they would soon find that this was an incorrect statement, and that they cannot be called manned when they have such men. I contend, Sir, that those who travel by those ships under the present manning hold their lives in their hands, and it is most disgraceful that the ships should be manned in the way they are. We can hear the murmurings in different places of the officers while they are doing the duties that seamen ought to do; and when they come into port they have to rig the gear for taking the cargo out of the vessels, and therefore it is a cause of murmuring even among the officers. We who hear it know that they are murmuring, and it is not true that the ships can be called manned. But we contend that people who travel under the present circumstances are doing so amid extreme danger to their lives. We hear a good deal about free labour. What is free labour? From port to port we see the people's goods continually falling into the river, going to destruction, and men jeopardizing their lives, because they are undertaking work they have not the skill to do. We see this continually—daily, in every port we visit. People's goods are pitched into the river and entirely lost. It is not a question as to who pays for it; but there is the fact, drawing a distinction between proper men and improper men put to do the work.

*Mr. P. Brown* : I should like, Mr. Chairman, to ask the Hon. George McLean, through you, a question. Is it not a fact that on the 5th July, when the Maritime Council met in his own office, he suggested that the officers should come into the Maritime Council?

*Hon. Mr. McLean* : I take it all these attacks are principally upon myself, and I will reply to them when you have done.—(Laughter.)

*Mr. Millar* : On the company as a whole?

*Hon. Mr. McLean* : I am quite satisfied. I am not going to quarrel. It is a matter I quite appreciate, and I make allowance for all these statements made under the circumstances, and I should just like to say I will review all these statements when my friends have done.

*The Chairman* : I am bound to give Mr. Brown an answer. As far as my memory carries me, the Hon. Mr. McLean said he would prefer that the officers should be under the guidance of the Maritime Council, because he thought that if they were in that position they would be amenable to reason, but by not being affiliated with the Maritime Council they were not so. That is clearly the way in which he put it to me, and I think Mr. Millar will indorse what I say.