

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: That is not my recollection. I will put it all right myself.—(Laughter.)

*Mr. P. Brown*: I know perfectly well the Hon. Mr. McLean did suggest that the officers should belong to the Maritime Council and come into it because it would be better to deal with the whole of the maritime labour affiliated than with each individual union. And through his suggestion I myself, when I got back to our own branch, recommended our own men—our members—to vote for the officers to come into the Maritime Council. And there was a meeting of the seamen here while we were here, and the result of that meeting, which was a very large one, was that only four or five members of the Seamen's Union voted in preference of the officers joining that Council; but, knowing that it was approved of by the head of the Union Steamship Company, recommended our members to vote in that direction. I contend, as far as Lyttelton is concerned, we worked the Union Company's boats until such time as the advertisement appeared in the evening papers calling for free labour. If that advertisement had not appeared in the papers we would still have worked on. We only hope and trust, as far as the wharf labourers are concerned, that there will be some good come out of this Conference, and that the Hon. George McLean, the other employers, and the shipping companies will view the thing in the same spirit as we do. We know that to maintain this battle right through will be ruin to both parties. There is no disguising the fact at all, because it is ruin to the country, and any one with the good of the country at heart must feel this as we do; and we, as wharf labourers, are prepared to come to any amicable settlement. With these few remarks I will sit down.

*Captain Highman*: At the opening of this Conference I took exception to one of the remarks of the Hon. Mr. McLean as to ships carrying lights, and I will put myself right on that point before going any further. From my experience, I say it is possible that lights could be carried on their opposite sides, as in the course of my career at sea I have seen them carried on the opposite sides. In reference to the Conference itself, the only response to those who are here congregated is that of the Union Steamship Company by the Hon. Mr. McLean; and it occurs to me, sir, that the other gentlemen who represent the land organizations are in an extremely invidious position. And I express surprise that those gentlemen who represent the employers' associations, and those different bodies, have so far committed themselves to an act of discourtesy as to ignore an appeal from the Government of this colony to meet here to discuss the present issue.—(Hear, hear.)—I may say that the act of the Union Steamship Company, in being represented by the Hon. Mr. McLean, shows that they themselves are willing in some way to come to the mediation the Government have brought about. But the other representatives of associations have shown us by their attitude that they are not willing. They have shown a want of courtesy, and a weakness. It is all very well to set up the argument that there is no quarrel; but there is a quarrel, and, as the Hon. Mr. McLean has said, it takes two to make a quarrel; and to say that there is no quarrel is, in itself, I maintain, childish. There is a quarrel with everybody who earns his livelihood, whether by his exertions with his brains or arms, or what is commonly known as "graft" in the colony. I regret very much the other employers are not present, and, as I have before said, it places the other bodies in a very invidious position. If the Hon. Mr. McLean wishes it I will give him the opportunity, by refraining from any remarks on my part as to the society I represent, to reply to some of the other delegates who have made speeches in regard to their organizations. I leave it in his hands now as to whether I shall go on. It appears to me it would be fair, as he is the only representative of the employers present, to give him as much license as we ourselves claim. We are, as a matter of fact, about twenty-six to one, and, in order to allow of fairness, I should like to give the Hon. Mr. McLean an opportunity of replying to those remarks he has already heard from the different bodies, and refrain from dwelling upon our own association, if he will claim, or would like to claim, the privilege of reply.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: I will reply to all at the same time.

*Captain Highman*: Then, as to the Mercantile Marine Officers' Association which has been formed in New Zealand, it was formed entirely on the basis, as I may say, of unionism. The officers got together and agreed that it was absolutely necessary that they should have the right to confer amongst themselves, apart from the steamship owners, inasmuch as the steamship owners hitherto have done nothing to improve the condition of the mercantile marine officers, though certainly in some services they are better looked after and cared for than in others. But they agreed, in regard to their individual rights, to assemble together and debate on their positions. As we have all observed recently, when this struggle came on that right the shipowners absolutely denied. In the manifesto put forth by the combined Shipowners' Association they said the officers should not in any way ally themselves with any other maritime organization. The slur has thus been cast that the officers are hobnobbing and rubbing shoulder to shoulder with the sailors, firemen, and all their subordinates. To this I give an emphatic denial. There has never been any such intention on the part of the officers to in any way ally themselves to the detriment of discipline on board the ships. They have never in any way, in considering the matter of affiliating or making an allowance with the Maritime Council, given a thought that this would have a deteriorating effect upon the discipline to be maintained on board the ships. We show no feeling of animosity towards the Union Steamship Company. I attach to them the fact that they themselves, by the way in which they have organized their service, have been much more the means of upsetting discipline on board. In one of the clauses of the Mercantile Marine Officers' Association's circular letter addressed to the Union Steamship Company was the alteration of the ship's accommodation with regard to the officers. This circular was sent to the Union Steamship Company on the 26th May, and there are members of the Maritime Council here now who met the Hon. George McLean and argued the matter out with him, and they will be able to verify the statement I make now. The officers themselves agreed when making these demands—and after having met the steamship owners of New Zealand, and being met with a decided repulse in regard to the fact of receiving the circular, or in any way countenancing their letter—I may explain that we were then in the course of affiliation with the Maritime Council, though it was not