

should have come from them as fair-minded men if they wished to bring the difficulty to an end. Then they say they would like some terms set out, so that they could see some possibility of a decision being arrived at. If two men quarrel, you would not expect one man to write a letter and say, "Admit that you are wrong first, and then I will come and argue with you;" but, on the contrary, sir, don't you think the two parties quarrelling should meet without such a condition? And I think the Union Steamship Company deserve the thanks of the colony in this matter for being represented here, and saying, "We are prepared to meet our employés." If the other employers had the same pluck they would have been here to-day. Then, again, they say the progress made by the new unionism is detrimental to the interests of the colony, but there is no objection to the old unionism. I really fail to see how a sensible man could pen a letter of that kind. If we read the pages of history we see that in times gone by the unions were a terror to the country. They had to have secret societies, which were a curse to the country, and the Government at Home were glad to see the new unions formed. If we are to revert to the old unionism we shall have men cutting each other's throats. We have higher hopes of the unionism of the future than that. Then, again, they say they have no objection to legitimate organizations. Surely no one with reason can say our present organizations are not legitimate. Every step we have taken has been, so far, within the law. If some of our unions have broken the law, surely the delegates present here will bear me out in saying that the leaders in every instance have done everything in their power to prevent this taking place. Nothing does unionism more harm than for these disturbances to take place. I was rather taken up with the remark of the Hon. Mr. McLean when he said no one wishes to crush unionism. There is no doubt that unionism, to be of any good, must be united; individually it is no good, there must be combination. Now, sir, if the Union Steamship Company desired to see unionism progress they must desire to see every man a member of the union, because if you employ men outside the union, then it is not fair to those who are inside, because, as Mr. Millar very nicely put it, if certain persons unite and obtain certain advantages, other persons who did not help to get those advantages should not be allowed to come in without paying their share the same as in a company. We say, further, that it is for the good of the country that the people should be united; and a minority, mark you, should not prevent the majority from carrying out their wishes. In this colony, if a certain thing is desired, and if the majority of the people want it, it is carried. If the minority turned round and said, "We will not have it," what would be the object of government? If this were to be we should never have such a thing as good government in the colony. And the same principle applies to unionism. The majority of the people say, "We want unionism," but a few object to it; and those few should be brought to join the unions, because the unions have for their object the furtherance of the interests of the working-classes, and therefore are a benefit to the colony. The Hon. Mr. McLean has stated, in regard to the dividends paid by the company, and as to what they were making, that when they started first they were making very little, and I can understand that. We all know that in new ventures nothing is made the first year or two; and it was the same with the Union Steamship Company. They started with capital, but had to buy boats which cost thousands of pounds; yet, after a year or two, they made 6 per cent., and then he went on to say they made 8 per cent., but he said no more. He did not tell you that they had a nice little reserve behind their backs; and to-day they have the finest fleet, I suppose, for a coastal service in the world, worth, perhaps, thousands of pounds. This is capital made by their trade in the colony, and if they go on as they are now the shareholders will have a nice little thing to themselves. I am putting this to show you what the company are doing. And as to the effect of opposition, you know when the little boat the "Jubilee" made its appearance what a difference there was in the freight and passage rates—how they vary to suit the occasion! Mr. McLean has admitted that they joined the Shipowners' Association. He tells you that when this present bother arose, and there was no prospect of it being settled with satisfaction, the shipowners forced his company to join them; and he said they were forced to give a bond that they would assist the other companies, who had for their avowed object the putting-down of unionism. If they joined with our enemies to put us down, is it not right that we should say, "We will stand together with our friends and say 'You will not'?" Furthermore, the Hon. George McLean stated that they should have the command of their own boats—as much as to say, why should the men interfere? why should the officers dictate what wages they are to get, and so forth? I would call attention to some remarks of Bishop Julius, one of our leading lights in Christchurch. He says this much: that every man has a right to do what he likes with his own providing he does not interfere with the rights of the general public. Now, the Union Steamship Company have the right to manage their boats provided they do not lay too much stress upon employés. No company has a right to run a huge concern and not allow their employés a fair share of what they earn. Every man should so use his own rights and privileges in this world as not to interfere with the rights of others. An employé has a right to a fair share of what he earns, after allowance has been made for the risks of the employer. All I would say, in conclusion, is this: that the Hon. George McLean gives Mr. Millar, who is the secretary, and, perhaps, the leader, of the Maritime Council, this much credit: that he did everything to prevent the struggle coming to our shores. And, before the advertisement appeared in the papers calling for seamen and firemen, Mr. Millar had—only the night before—interviewed the manager of the Union Steamship Company in Dunedin, and was under the impression that it would result in something good; but, the advertisement calling for seamen and firemen appearing in the Press of the following day, he had no option but to call the men out. The unions must be given credit for possessing a little common-sense in these matters. I, like a good many more, think that this present struggle will end in good to the colony, because in times of adversity we all think a little; and there is no doubt but that sooner or later the great question will come before us, because the more the colony goes ahead the more poverty there will be in it. The only way to prevent this poverty increasing in the colony is by forming strong unions all over the country, and, if we admit that principle, the unions, to be of any good, must combine.