

1891.
NEW ZEALAND.

LABOUR CONFERENCE

HELD AT WELLINGTON, OCTOBER, 1890 (REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

DELEGATES.

New Zealand Federated Wharf Labourers' Union.—Mr. D. P. Fisher, Mr. P. Brown, Mr. R. Seymour.
Mercantile Marine Officers' Association.—Captain Highman, Mr. Cornish.
Amalgamated Miners' and Labourers' Union.—Mr. J. Lomas, Mr. Ansell.
New Zealand Typographical Association.—Mr. T. Mills, Mr. F. C. Millar.
Wellington Trades and Labour Council.—Mr. H. C. Jones, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Hutcheson, Mr. Mudge, Mr. Avery, Mr. R. P. Johnson, Mr. J. Graham.
Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants.—Mr. Winter, Mr. Hoban, Mr. Elvines.
Canterbury Trades and Labour Council.—Mr. Parker, Mr. Sandford.
New Zealand Federated Wharf Carters', Expressmen's, and Storemen's Union.—Mr. Williams, Mr. Dobson.
Operative Bootmakers' Association, Dunedin.—Mr. Tees.
Operative Bootmakers' Association, Wellington.—Mr. Browett.
Federated Seamen's Union of New Zealand, Federated Stewards' and Cooks' Union of New Zealand, Auckland Trades and Labour Council.—Mr. J. A. Millar.
Greymouth Labour Union.—Mr. Boase.
Union Steamship Company, Northern Steamship Company.—Hon. G. McLean.

PROCEEDINGS.

THURSDAY, 2ND OCTOBER, 1890.

The Conference assembled at 10 o'clock a.m. at the Parliament Buildings, at Wellington.

Present: Mr. Ansell, Mr. Avery, Mr. Boase, Mr. Browett, Mr. P. Brown, Mr. Cornish, Mr. Dobson, Mr. Elvines, Mr. D. P. Fisher, Mr. J. Graham, Captain Highman, Mr. Hoban, Mr. Hutcheson, Mr. R. P. Johnson, Mr. H. C. Jones, Mr. Lomas, Mr. Meyer, the Hon. G. McLean, Mr. J. A. Millar, Mr. F. C. Millar, Mr. T. Mills, Mr. Mudge, Mr. Parker, Mr. Sandford, Mr. R. Seymour, Mr. Tees, Mr. Williams, Mr. Winter.

Resolved, on the motion of the Hon. G. McLean, "That Mr. D. P. Fisher do take the chair."

Resolved, on the motion of Mr. Meyer, "That the representatives of the Press be admitted to the meetings of the Conference."

Mr. F. Waldegrave, the Secretary, brought up a list of the associations and unions which had been invited to take part in the Conference; also a list of those which had accepted the invitation, and those which had refused.

The Secretary also brought up the letters and telegrams from the various associations and unions in reply to the invitations extended to them to be represented at the Conference.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr. Winter, "That the Hon. the Premier be requested to invite the Railway Commissioners to attend the Conference, and to urge the Commissioners to accept such invitation."

The Chairman invited the Hon. G. McLean to address the Conference.

Hon. Mr. McLean: I have no objection whatever to commence this Conference, and to say that I am very glad of the opportunity of being here amongst you. With regard to this difficulty, I may say there never was a strike conducted with less irritation so far as those immediately interested are concerned. Personally, I have taken good care that nothing has fallen from me, or

from any one over whom I have control, that has been calculated to irritate any one; and I will further say that I believe the Union Company has the sympathy of almost every employé who walked out of their ships. That is no doubt the reason why the strike has been conducted so quietly, and of the success we have met with in remanning our steamers. This is a case in which our men left us—were taken out of our ships—and we could not object. But, whether we were obliged legally or not, we paid them up to the day they left. We deprived no man of his earnings. At all events these were our instructions: that every man should be paid his money no matter what course he might see fit to adopt. Therefore, while we must positively insist on sticking to the men now in our employment and to those who came back to us, we are just as ready to employ any of those who are still out should they choose to come back, according as we have room for them, and irrespective of the question whether they formerly belonged to a union or not. We have never on that account debarred them from coming back. We are ready to forget and forgive if they do come, and let bygones be bygones. There is no reason whatever why any one section of the community should not work with the other. When we have been short of a union steward or seaman in the past we have been allowed by the union to take on a non-union man until such time as we could get another, so that it is not anything new for union men to work with non-union men. The simple condition was that the non-union man was put ashore when we got a union man. I may just as well take this opportunity of giving you a little history of our company. I think that when I have finished the Union Company will command the just sympathy of all the gentlemen who are assembled here. From small beginnings we started this company. It has been conducted more like a Government institution for the good of the colony than as a speculation profitable to the shareholders. For a while we paid no dividend; after a while we paid 6 per cent., then 8 per cent., and in two or three good years we gave a bonus of 1 per cent. Then we came back again to 8 per cent., which we have been paying ever since. Now, a steamship company is to a certain extent a risky concern, and 8 per cent. is nothing extraordinary to pay to the shareholders. We have increased our capital to increase our fleet, and we have used a certain amount of the earnings of profitable trades in developing trades that are new, and, as you all know, for the time being unprofitable, instead of paying it away in dividends, as we might have done. The company has also been worked so as to concentrate the expenditure in New Zealand; consequently it is of as great a benefit to the colony as a Government institution, and should therefore command the sympathy of the whole of the people. We have not taken advantage of our position as monopolists to raise the rates of freight when we might have done so, but have divided the space amongst the shippers. The rates for carrying grain to Australia have been such that no other company cared to interfere. The principal market is Sydney, and the freight to Sydney is 10s. per ton, but when grain is carried in big bags that often reduces it to 8s. 6d. per ton. Nobody, I suppose, would grumble at that. The cost of discharging the vessels in Sydney has latterly, in some cases, been as high as 2s. 3d. per ton, and the charges for loading in New Zealand as high on an average as 1s. 3d. per ton; so you will see that the actual freight left to the ship is not an excessive one. As to our passenger rates, I venture to assert that they will compare favourably with those charged in any other part of the world, even in England and America, except in cases where there is extreme competition. The excursion fares have been particularly reasonable. With regard to our employés we have always endeavoured to keep them satisfied, and have never ground them down in any sense whatever, while the directors have taken every opportunity that presented itself of enabling the men about them to share the prosperity of the company. We knew that the men were well satisfied, but their leaders were always wanting something more. Consequently, a revision of the rules often took place, and this always meant a rise in wages, necessitating the drawing of more money out of the pockets of the public. Now, this could only be done to a certain extent, as, if the rates charged were too high, the public would not travel. Therefore if more revenue could not be got an increase of wages would be impossible. All that any company can do is to divide its earnings fairly amongst its employés and allow a proper margin for the capital employed. In every trade, whether it is a struggling trade or a good trade, the employés have a right to a fair share of the earnings—(Hear hear)—but if you go any further, and the money is not being earned by the employer, what do you do? You simply drive him into the Insolvency Court; the men are thrown out of employment; a young industry that ought to be fostered is nipped in the bud, and probably lost to the colony. You talk about “fighting capital!” Where is the acquired wealth in New Zealand? There is no such thing. It is only the hard earnings of the industrious that have been put into co-operative and limited-liability companies as investments. So, when men talk about fighting capital, it really means fighting their own earnings. Now to come to the history of this strike: We as a company, I think I may safely say, have few enemies. We have endeavoured by every means in our power to satisfy the public and our own employés, and to keep everybody in sympathy with us. I thought we had succeeded in that. When this unfortunate affair arose it was said, “Why should you be a member of the Shipowners’ Association?” Well, the truth is, we were forced into it. The labour organizations here had federated with Australian organizations, and were pressing unduly their demands upon us. Up to within a short period of the strike the arrangement between shipowners was not of a very binding nature. At the time when the Seamen’s Union was making demand after demand the fleets on the other side were all running against each other. They were not making money, and the owners warned their employés that any further demand would bring matters to a crisis. Now, this trouble started in Australia. A seaman and a steward had a quarrel on board a ship, and the owners, having investigated the matter, pronounced the seaman in the wrong. He was accordingly dismissed. The Seamen’s Union then demanded that he be reinstated. The owners offered to put him into another ship, but the officers of the union said No, he must be put back in the same ship. That is how the unions were working. In the same way there were difficulties amongst our own men which were likely to bring about the same state of things. Now, I say that it is absolutely necessary for us to get back the command of our ships and to hold the command of them. We are not going to do badly by those people who have left

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 employes 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 employes. 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

you must not establish a prohibitory entrance-fee to qualify a man for joining. Take the sum of £3 or £5: where is the man coming along seeking employment who can put down the money? A man is debarred getting into the union where such a prohibitory fee is charged. I remember being asked to take a respectable settler's son in to shovel coal in one of our ships. It was necessary that he should join the union. He went and paid his money. What was the result? Although I was using all my influence to get him in, it took ten months, and he was blackballed four or five times! I have never since tried to put in another man, and, whenever any one came to me now, I simply referred him to the officers of the union. I would never have anything to do with such a case again. But it has always appeared to me an extraordinary thing that the chairman of the Union Company could not put a man of unblemished character into one of their own boats to shovel coal! It has always appeared to me that the entrance-fee to the union is too large in amount. There are not many men who have the money to pay it. Probably a man who is in poor circumstances has a wife and family, and such a one is prevented from obtaining a living. It was only the other day a sailor from the "Doric" came, and we had to give him a passage away. He could not gain entrance to any union, because he had no money. As far as we could see he was a well-doing man. Although you all look upon it as a grievance, I believe this strike will set you all to work to reconstruct your unions, and that the outcome will be for everybody's benefit. I believe that good will come out of this trouble.—(Hear, hear.)—First of all, impulsive men have been getting the better of their officers, and pushing them to do this and that. Therefore they were not able to restrain them. If these leaders wanted to bring the men to their senses, let them put them in power. It is only then such a man begins to see his responsibility; it is then he sees that he has been led astray himself, or that he has been leading others astray. It is all very well to talk about killing the unions. No one wants to kill the unions. Why should he, unless they are not unions but "corners" in labour, as in America? Unions should really be for the amelioration of their own class. I am quite satisfied that you can work union and non-union men together, and that you will by doing so be better off and more likely to succeed in the amelioration of all the people whose welfare everybody has at heart. At all events, all through this struggle I have taken care that there should be no irritation so far as I could prevent it. In regard to all the misrepresentation which has appeared in the papers, I have never answered it by so much as a line. Some cases there were of great exaggeration of statement, but we let the exaggerations answer themselves. All reasonable men knew what they were—that they were exaggerations. Let us all work together: that is what I ask of you. I have shown you that the seamen, when men were scarce, did not object to work on board ship beside non-union men. That appears to be a cardinal point with you. I do not think it should be so. At all events, with regard to the men whom we have now employed, we take up this reasonable ground: that we cannot part with these men. We will take back any one that has left our service; we are taking them back now. We are not going to keep even the most remote feeling of bitterness against any man who has been called out. We will make no difference with him any more than with any other man in our service. We will forget, we will forgive. When it is all over we will bear no feeling of bitterness or ill-will towards each other. It is not long since we had a fight—the lumpers' fight—(laughter)—in Dunedin. We won the day; but, notwithstanding, the men came to us and said, "You fought us fairly; we are beaten. Do not make any difference among us, and we are quite ready to go to work." We said, "All right; let bygones be bygones." We might let this end in the same way. Then we can work in perfect harmony again, and continue to be the success and credit to New Zealand that I believe we have been in the past.—(Applause.)

Mr. J. A. Millar: As Mr. McLean has put his side of the question before the Conference, I suppose it devolves on me to lay down the other side. In the first place, I may say that I do not intend to deny what Mr. McLean has stated with regard to the wages paid by his company, and that he personally was willing to do all he could for the welfare of the men. The proof as to that may be found in the fact that we are not asking for any increased pay at the present time. But he gives us to understand that the origin of this dispute was the withdrawal of the men from the "Corinna." This I deny emphatically. That is entirely an error. The withdrawal from the "Corinna" took place two months before the present dispute originated. Nothing whatever was said by the men all that while. When this dispute commenced the matter of the "Corinna" was brought in with the rest. The actual dispute arose when the Shipowners' Association denied to the officers the right to do as they pleased outside of the contract of service which they had with the association. The whole matter lay in this: We say that we have the right to do as we please outside our contract with the employers. The right that was denied to the officers is practically denied to us, and every right that is denied to us is held on to by the Shipowners' Association, by the Union Company, or any other company which holds the same view. I mention the Union Company because it is local, and has federated itself to the Shipowners' Association. Well, the officers federated with the Maritime Council. If the Union Company had the right to federate with the Shipowners' Association—and I do not say they had not—the officers had the same right to federate with the Maritime Council. If the Union Company found it desirable to federate with the Shipowners' Association for the protection of their interests, we contend for the equality of right in the officers to federate with the Maritime Council if they pleased, having the same object in view. It is quite incorrect to say that we requested that the Union Company should withdraw from the Shipowners' Association. We never made any such proposal; so that, as far as we were concerned, they were never asked to withdraw from the Australian society. We knew that the Union Company must keep in with that association so as to prevent them interfering with the Union Company's trade, and their boats being swamped by the opposition that might possibly be started against them. When the whole of the employers met and dealt with this question of labour they practically said that when a man has done his work he is not at liberty to go to his home and do as he pleases with the remainder of his time. We say the man is under a contract to perform a certain duty, for which he receives remuneration. So long as that contract is performed there is no further

obligation upon the worker. Both parties to the contract have specific rights. The association said practically that there was no such right. That is the way this dispute came about. The affair of the "Corinna" had nothing to do with it. I notice that the whole of the letters read by the secretary from the employers are pretty much in the one strain. They take up a certain position, and make statements which are very vague. If they had any position to stand upon, why have they not come round this table to tell us about it? Mr. McLean has told us that the Union Company's boats are now manned with the pick of New Zealand—the "flower of New Zealand"—who have gone to sea to act as seamen, firemen, or trimmers. I can only say that is certainly not the case as regards the "Te Anau," which has just left this port. There were seven lads from the plough, who may never have seen the sea in their life, two tinsmiths, an ex-tramway-driver, and a photographer. I need not enumerate the cases of other boats, but it is the same throughout. That the Union Company have a right to employ what men they like I do not deny. I admit the right of the company to attach any condition it likes to the employment it offers. But if the company has such rights, will Mr. McLean say that the worker has no right to attach conditions before he accepts the employment? Has he not a right to reject conditions that are prejudicial to his interests and the interests of his trade? We do not say that the company must not employ free labour as much as it likes, but it cannot compel us to work with that free labour. I do not think it will do it. We may object to it, but we have not said that in no circumstances will we work with a non-union man. We do not come here with any hard-and-fast statement on the subject. We do not say that in no case will we work with a non-union man, but we say there is a rule of our union that union men and non-union men should not work together, and that rule we are prepared to uphold. We do not deny the justice of the proposition that every man has the right to sell his labour to the best advantage. I do not deny the right of the Union Company to do the best they can for their shareholders. Mr. McLean is a shareholder in a large company: I am not. He has paid money for his shares—that is his capital, that is part of the capital of the company—and he and his company do the best they can to improve their position. What is a union? It is a combination of working-men trying to get the best terms for their labour, which is their only capital. The only difference is that the capital of the one is limited, while the capital of the other is practically unlimited. There is no other difference, not the slightest. We do not say that any man who likes should not join the Union Company. He has a perfect right to pay his money, and reap the benefits which they can give. We say the union is a combination of workers to improve their position, to keep up the standard of their particular trade, to obtain protection for those engaged in it. Therefore the same principle that is recognised in a body, a union of shareholders, to promote their interest holds equally good when applied to a trades-union. Mr. McLean has said that his company and the Seamen's Union got on very well up to the time when they were constantly revising their rules. No doubt you cannot make things perfect in a day. Where we have seen defects from time to time we have tried to amend them. I think it was in 1884 that the Union Company joined the Shipowners' Association. That, you will allow, was going outside New Zealand. The New Zealand Seamen's Union is simply a branch of Victoria—it was formed by Victoria. It was formed originally when the first struggle took place. To say, therefore, that we affiliated to an Australian union for the purpose of crushing the Union Company will not hold water, because we have been a branch of the union since the time of the first struggle. We do not object to the affiliation of the employers whenever they choose to affiliate; but, if they may do so, why should we not do the same thing? We admit their right: what is admitted on one side should be granted on the other. But I have already said there is no question of affiliation in this particular instance. When the last revision of the rules of the Seamen's Union took place it was admitted that the men were working sixteen and seventeen hours a day without overtime.—(Mr. McLean: No.)—I will show that the men were working sixteen and seventeen hours a day without overtime. It was suggested that the eight hours should be the same for the seamen as for the firemen. I admit at once that, in effect, eight hours for the seamen is equivalent to an increase of pay, for if men are working seventeen hours a day without overtime, it is a clear gain to them to have their labour curtailed to eight hours. This suggestion, with other proposals, was laid before the Shipowners' Association. That body agreed to the whole lot, with the exception of this proposal as regards the hours of labour. The Conference that was being held on the subject adjourned for the purpose of enabling the union to submit a fresh clause. The clause was drawn up and submitted, so that it should be twelve hours. The shipowners asked for a few days to consider it. They got that. They sent back the rules with half a dozen of the proposals they had previously agreed to scratched out, and saying they would not agree to anything more. Our representatives were virtually dismissed by the Shipowners' Association. I told the Union Company that we did not intend to force them even into this twelve hours' arrangement. They agreed to pay for Sunday sailing, and to increase the pay for overtime to eighteenpence. We were prepared to leave alone the hours of labour for the present. With regard to the men, it seems very strange that they could not give them an increase, when they received the engineers with open arms. According to the Amalgamated Society's rules, £25 a month should be the wage for the first engineer, and £18 a month for the second; but I say that you have not an engineer in your employment drawing £25 a month for the first or £18 a month for the second. There is not an engineer on the smaller boats receiving more than £20. If the engineers had been men of principle they would have waited for a favourable day and not taken advantage of you when to all intents you were on your knees. The Union Company cannot say that we have attacked them when they were struggling and in difficulty. We have attacked them in the fulness of their strength. We did not wait until they were on their knees and submissive to be kicked. As to the seamen's demands, we were prepared to waive that. So far as the Seamen's Union is concerned, everything we have done has been not only fair and reasonable but carried out in a reasonable manner. Since 1885, the time of the Conference in New South Wales, when the shipowners agreed to a Board of Conciliation, events have happened rapidly. They knocked off this Board altogether because one or two decisions were against them. They, not

the Seamen's Union, have been the aggressors. We contend that our action has been beneficial to the owners themselves. The hours of labour for the engine-room were curtailed much to your advantage as well as to that of the men, for it is admitted by some of your engineers, who are candid, that they are able to keep their engines in quite as good a condition with a third of the stuff that used to be employed. I question, if you will submit a statement of the amounts paid on account of the engine-room, whether you can show any increase at all in the amount paid for overtime. I cannot put the figures down plainly at the moment, for I have not the necessary statistics, but I think I am safe in saying that if you will submit a statement there is no increase on that. They were not going "soojie, moojie" night after night. About mines I cannot speak. There are gentlemen here who are able to deal with that matter. I am looking at the whole question from the seaman's point of view. I must now take Mr. McLean's statement about what he calls the "prohibitory fee for entering the union." He told the Conference that he tried for ten months to get a man into a union, and that he was for that period of time unable to effect that purpose. I think Mr. McLean, you told me, or rather you admitted, that that happened about six years ago. At that time there were three-fourths of a majority required for any one who was balloted for to become a member. It is perfectly true that men who wished to become members have been rejected. If they were dismissed without election it must have been for some reason recognised by the union as prejudicial to its interest. It may be incompetence, or a variety of reasons. You cannot expect that seamen should ruin their union. You must surely give us the right to say whom we will accept and whom we will not accept. If we were to send an incompetent man on board any of the Union Company's ships we should very soon hear of it. The society is formed for seamen, firemen, and trimmers. We take in a certain number of colonial youths. As to this cry that we are so conservative, if so, how is it that you have to scour the country to get men when you want them? You have agents all round and up and down the country to try and get men, and yet you have not been able to get ten men who are regular seamen. The statement answers itself. If the society had been so conservative you would not have required to go any further than to put an advertisement in the papers. You are unable to get the men you want; the bulk of the *bona fide* seamen are in the ranks of the union at the present time. As to the charge of £3 and £5 as entrance-fee, I am not aware that there is a single union which charges that, or anything like it. To nine-tenths of the unions the entrance-fee is 2s. 6d.; £2 is the maximum. The charge for entrance-fee is arranged according to the accumulated funds of the society. If there is £10,000 to draw upon, you have to do certain things. If you allow a man all the rights of the union without paying anything for them, I would ask, are you going to reduce the capital account, to which every member admitted has contributed his share? You say in your company that your share is a £10 share, and that when a man has paid for his share he is entitled to certain benefits. Is it reasonable to say that we should admit men to all the benefits of the union for 2s. 6d.? If a man wants a share in a company he has to pay for it: for what a man pays into our union we give him the opportunity of making a good living. It is now admitted that the persons who are crying against this union are the same persons who once before urged us on to its present constitution. I will show you why they did so. Formerly, when the unions used to take in any one that offered for 2s. 6d., offers and inducements were held out to seamen to desert from the Home ships. At all events, the unions were accused of making offers and inducements to men to desert wholesale. The persons interested in the maritime trades—merchants and others—said, "You should make your conditions of entrance more stringent, so as to prevent these men deserting." We made our rules more stringent. We said no man could join who had not a colonial discharge—unless he was a *bona fide* seaman, and had resided two years in the colony. But now we are called conservative by the very men who asked us to do that. You say that we are trying to make a corner in labour. No; we are trying to carry out rules for the protection of all classes of labour. We say that union labour and non-union labour should not work together. We are responsible for the men we send out from the union. You say you have no wish to crush labour. If you mean that, acknowledge that we have the same right to the benefits of our union, for which we pay—the same right as you have to the benefits of your shares. Why should you try and disgust men with their union, pressing men to go out of them into the ranks of free labour already swollen by desertion from the union? But you say, "We do not object to your forming a union, but we will not allow you to affiliate." Why so? Because the men who speak thus think that they can deal with a branch or a single trade and crush them in detail. I think I can say, judging from the expressions of opinion which I hear around me, that there are representatives of 63,000 men of this colony assembled in this room; and the intention is to amalgamate more closely still. We do not want to cripple capital any more than you do; but we do not wish to be brought to that condition that we should have to work for sweating wages. If that cannot be done without in the colony, then labour is better out of it. I admit that, on the whole, this struggle has been, up to the present, conducted in an amicable spirit so far as the company is concerned. But they have done one or two things which caused a little irritation. One of these was the barricading the wharf. The company may say there was a necessity for that. But I do not think there was any necessity for it. With the exception of one little brush in Dunedin, there was no necessity for barricading the wharf. I say this: that had the union men been inclined to take action they were provoked to it. I have seen men, guarded by the police, putting their finger to their noses in derision at union men. If a non-union man assaults a union man he gets a month; if a union man assaults a non-union man he gets three months, and the affair is made much of by all the newspapers. If any free labourer challenges a union man to a breach of the peace, let him be punished; if a union man assaults a free labourer, let him be punished; but let both be treated alike; give the same to both sides. In conclusion, I would say, there is no feeling, so far as I am concerned, or so far as the Seamen's Union is concerned, against the Union Company. The men are willing to go back provided they can go back on terms fair and acceptable to themselves; but to go back and work with non-union labour I think they never will. I do not speak for other societies; other societies, possibly, have not put their rules in force. On behalf of the Cooks and Stewards', and also on behalf of

the Seamen's, Union I say that they decline to accept employment from any person who will compel them to work with non-union men. You have all seen pretty well up to the present time how this dispute has arisen, and how it has been continued. The thing that caused the strike was the Union Company employing non-union men on the wharf in Sydney. So far as the Seamen's Union is concerned, we did everything that was possible to prevent it coming to New Zealand. It was arranged that the "Tarawera" should go on her voyage. I went to the directors myself and induced them to work with their own crew. We had a crew of capable men ready, and we agreed to put our crew in to work the vessel—to put in firemen, trimmers, and every kind of labour in order to keep New Zealand clear of this strike. Even after the trouble that came with the "Wairarapa" we were willing to help the whole coastal trade as far as was in our power. We did not call a single man out of the coastal steamers. At half-past 5 o'clock in the evening this matter of union and non-union labour was to be considered. The next morning there appeared an advertisement in the paper, "Wanted, seamen, firemen, and trimmers." Our union undertook to carry out the agreement made—that in some particular cases a non-union man might go into a ship, but we should not be compelled to work with non-union men. When they did afterwards force us to work with non-union men, then our men were compelled to stop working. I say, then, the Union Company were the aggressors. We did not object to allow a union man to go the trip with a non-union man, but when the ship came back it was expected that the non-union man would either join the union or go ashore. If a man lost his passage we have allowed a non-union man to go the round trip and come back with the ship before we asked that he should be discharged. We have always endeavoured to meet the Union Company fairly. Whenever one of our men committed himself on board their ships we knew how to correct him; so that he was much more afraid of the union than of the Union Company. We have more than once paid a day's demurrage when there was any detention on account of anything done by our men. We paid the Westport Coal Company £9 for two hours' delay at Timaru. We paid the Northern Company £13 on account of the detention of the "Rowena." I say again that, in so far as the Seamen's Union is concerned, we have endeavoured to assist the company in carrying on their work in every possible way. We are prepared to do the same to-morrow. But, as to the question of union men and non-union men working together, that forms an insuperable barrier. I, of course, speak for my own society. I allow other societies to speak for themselves. I think I have traversed the whole of the ground opened up by Mr. McLean. There may be something that I shall have to say hereafter, at a later stage of the Conference. In the meantime, I will not take up more of your attention.

Mr. R. Seymour: The Hon. Mr. McLean has spoken of working his company more like a Government institution than as a commercial enterprise. It is probably to that circumstance that we owe the fact that the Hon. Mr. McLean exerted his influence in the Legislative Council to prevent the labour legislation, which would have given relief to the working-class, and prohibited a measure intended for the benefit of seamen, passing into law. What would be the first result of non-union men being employed to work together? It would be this: that one or, at most, two union men would perhaps be employed, for the sake of their skill and experience, to show the others what to do. The ultimate effect could only be to give a premium to incompetence; and when you thus encouraged incompetence there would be an end of the union. The Hon. Mr. McLean has said that the Union Company used its money for the development of other trades. We know this: that, had it not been for the development of these other trades, Wellington would have been in a better position as regards shipping than it is this day. In any case, where non-union men were employed with union men there must be a considerable amount of overwork for the latter. As to the company not taking advantage of its monopoly, that argument would not hold water. It is a weak argument. The fact is that the monopoly of the Union Company was used with great disadvantage to the colony. He goes on to say that there had been some "grating" on board ship between men. He would probably admit that there were faults on both sides. It was well known that officers and engineers were not always the best-tempered people in the world. If a man is called names there was no doubt the person who used such injudicious remarks was creating friction. The Hon. Mr. McLean says that, owing to these "gratings," he and his company must get the command of their own vessels. He says he paid well and acted fair; but, if the unions are not allowed to act fair to themselves and to each other, it is a question, indeed, how long the Union Company will continue to act fair or pay well. I must take exception to the statement of the Hon. Mr. McLean when he says that his company had been running weekly boats only for the purpose of keeping the men employed. No company in the world would run boats for the sake merely of keeping men in their employment. He says he has got young men, the "flower of New Zealand," to man his vessels. The meaning of this is simply that he has three or four men in his vessels where only two had been employed previously. We know that there are some employers who stick at nothing; and where they have men, or employ men, who are not capable of doing the work to be done, the result is that the souls are worked out of the men who are really competent, and have to make up for the deficiency of the so-called "flower of New Zealand." Again, as to those "gratings" to which the Hon. Mr. McLean has referred, a man may make injudicious remarks on board ship. If they are such as should be visited with punishment his society will punish him. Mr. Millar has shown pretty clearly that in case of a ship not able to go to sea on account of anything done by a union man compensation has been paid, but, at the same time, the man is punished, and, as he said, a man is a good deal more afraid of the union than he is of the company. If he is expelled that man's name is sent to other branches, and he must leave the colony. The Hon. Mr. McLean has complained that we endeavour to starve his vessels by stopping the supply of meat. But, as the saying is, it is all fair in war; so in a struggle of this kind he must not be surprised that, when the unions are attacked, they use every means not only to strengthen their own position, but to weaken that of their opponents. It is perfectly true, as Mr. Millar pointed out, that the very men who are now complaining of the conservatism of the unions are the same men that urged them to make the rules more stringent. The Hon. Mr. McLean referred to a young man whom he tried for a long time to

get into a union. No doubt it did appear to him very hard that the managing director of a large and powerful company should not be able to put whom he chose into the union. But Mr. McLean should recollect that there might be other reasons for the union refusing to admit anybody that even an influential person should recommend. The unions have had experience that when they admitted such a person another member very soon had to leave one of the boats. Another reason might be that the union were expected to recommend only competent hands for employment. If they sent an incompetent person on board any one of the company's boats they would very soon be asked for an explanation why they sent such an incompetent person there. If it is expected that union men of experience should be compelled to work beside non-union men, that is a proposal that cannot be entertained for a moment. It is to the advantage of the employers themselves that the average of competency should be high. Take, for instance: In discharging coal the proper thing is four men and five baskets to the ton. I saw six of the "flower of New Zealand" at it the other morning, and there were ten baskets to the ton, and they came up at about the same rate that beam-girders would be raised out of a hold. Would it be fair to ask our men to go and work beside such men as those? It would be impossible, for the result would almost immediately be that three-fourths of the burden would fall on the good men. Could a union be kept up to find such incompetent men as I refer to employment? If we sent them to do good men's work they would be returned on our hands with indignation, and we should be told that they were not "flowers" but "weeds."

The Chairman read the following correspondence:—

"SIR,—
"Wellington, 2nd October, 1890.
"I have the honour to transmit to you copy of a resolution passed at a meeting of the Labour Conference held this day—viz., 'That the Hon. the Premier be requested to invite the Railway Commissioners to attend the Conference, and to urge the Commissioners to accept such invitation.'

"Awaiting the favour of an early reply,
"The Hon. the Premier, Wellington."
"I have, &c.,
"D. P. FISHER, Chairman.

"SIR,—
"Premier's Office, Wellington, 2nd October, 1890.
"I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this day's date, enclosing a resolution requesting that the Government will urge upon the Railway Commissioners to attend the Conference.

"The Government did not ask the Railway Commissioners to attend the Conference because they did not consider that they came within the scope of the resolution of the House of Representatives, which seemed to them to refer to private employers.

"The reason why the Railway Servants' Society was asked was, because they had affiliated with the Maritime Council, and had so become, to some extent, mixed up with the unfortunate difficulties now existing.

"The Government are of opinion that they should in no way become a party to the present disagreement; their duty is impartially to maintain the law, and do anything that may be in their power to facilitate a settlement; but they have grave doubts whether the presence of the Commissioners at the Conference—being, as they are, an important department of the public service—would facilitate a settlement of the difficulties.

"I have, therefore, felt it my duty to forward your letter, to which this is a reply, to the Commissioners, leaving the matter of attending the Conference entirely to their own discretion.

"I have, &c.,
"The Chairman of the Labour Conference,
Wellington."
"H. A. ATKINSON.

Mr. Ansell: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—The point I wish to touch upon is the coal question, which is at issue at the present time. In his speech this morning the Hon. Mr. McLean stated that the only interest which the Union Steamship Company held in the colony in regard to coal was in the Grey Valley. That, I believe, is an actual fact at the present time; but it is only right that the delegates present should know the exact state of affairs which is alleged to exist, and which will most likely take an important part in the deliberations of this Conference, as dealing with the monopoly of the Union Steamship Company. In 1885 the Union Steamship Company acquired the Koranui Mine at Westport, and it was still in their name in July, 1889.

Hon. Mr. McLean: It was sold years ago.

Mr. Ansell: I say it is credited to you, Mr. McLean.

Hon. Mr. McLean: We have no interest in it.

Mr. Ansell quoted an extract from a report issued by the West Coast Coal Committee, stating that the Koranui Mine was in the possession of the Union Company, and then proceeded: I believe that the Union Steamship Company has parted with this mine on some conditions to the Westport Coal Company, and I understand that a part of this compact was in order that the Union Steamship Company should acquire the fleet of boats held by the Westport Coal Company. We know very well that the Koranui Mine was closed a short time after the Union Steamship Company became owners of it, and, as Mr. McLean stated this morning, they have adopted the course which they have taken on the West Coast in order to assist the prosperity of the West Coast. Now, I am sorry to say that in the closing of this mine a large number of men were thrown out of work at Koranui, and a number of them came down to the Grey Valley, and we had to share the work with them. In order that the gentlemen present may know the facts of the case, I may say that Captain Williams, an owner of ships in Wellington, purchased a large number of shares of the Coalpit Heath Coal Company, and the Westport Coal Company in time acquired the Coalpit Heath Mine. Somewhere about the same time the Union Steamship Company acquired the boats of Captain Williams. Mr. Martin Kennedy at that time owned a fleet, and also the Brunner Mine, and I believe, in regard to the Brunner Mine, there was some arrangement come to with the Union

Steamship Company by which they acquired a share in this mine, and also the fleet of Mr. Martin Kennedy. And by the acquiring of these fleets and these mines they established a monopoly. Now, I would ask you to consider this question. No matter what the good intentions of the Union Steamship Company may have been, what has been done has been detrimental to the best interests of the Coast. There was another small man working independently, and the Grey Valley Coal Company acquired his mine, and, if rumour is to be believed, it was not on account of the mine,* but on account of the small vessel † running in opposition to the monopoly of the Union Steamship Company. This mine was acquired and allowed to fill with water. The Koranui Mine was dismantled; the Wallsend Mine is now being allowed to fill with water, and I am sorry to say that I do not believe that is to the best interests of the Coast. There is another thing in regard to this which I am afraid looks very suspicious. In the first six months, as compared with the corresponding six months of the previous year, before the company had it, there was a decrease in trade to the extent of 24,000 tons, and there was £6,600 spent less in wages. If such is the case I fail to see where any benefits accrue to the working-classes—there might have been benefit accruing to the Union Steamship Company. And I may state that, immediately this monopoly was formed, the price went up in Greymouth, close to the mines, 2s. 6d. per ton, and in other places to a considerable extent. But, coming closer to the question now at issue, Mr. McLean stated this morning that he could not see how it was they could not demand coal from their own mines. I admit they have a perfect right to do so, and we have also a perfect right to say whether we will work to supply them with coal from their own mines. I do not think we should have taken such strong steps as we have had we not been bound in honour to support the body with which we had amalgamated—the Maritime Council. Now, I ask Mr. McLean, in common fairness will he state the reason the associated employers in Australia had for refusing the Ellis Company coal? If the employers had a right to refuse the Ellis Company we have a perfect right to refuse to supply coal to any vessels which are manned by non-union labour. This was the stand we took up, and we have a perfect right to take up such a stand, because if we had supplied coal to any one who came, indiscriminately, we should be finding coal to punish the members of our associations. I am sorry it has come to the point it has; but we are bound to do the best we can as co-partners in the association in order to bring about a settlement of the dispute. We have been fighting for it a long time, and we know very well we have nothing in particular to thank the Union Steamship Company for, because I can tell you honestly that the Union Steamship Company had not been in the Grey Valley Coal Company long—I take it that, being quarter shareholders, they must have some control over the company—before there was a system of what I call starvation practised on the miners, who were reduced one or two days per week, and had a demand for 6d. a ton decrease in their wages. I believe the company were making a profit from that mine up to the time the system of weighing was changed, and then they distinctly stated they were losing so much money, £250 per week. I believe we cannot say they were losing £250 per week; their books do not show it. But I ask you in common fairness, was it the miners who were the cause of this loss, or was it the amount of capital put into the mines which should not have been put in, and which was not being used? The Grey Valley Coal Company have been compelled to have such a large number of officers to officer these mines, which they knew were not paying, that it is my firm conviction it was not because the mines would not pay, but because they were over-officered for amount of coals won. These are facts, and I am quite certain the Hon. George McLean will bear me out in what I am stating, that the miners have endeavoured on all occasions to do the best they can to maintain peace and quietness, and also to do the best they possibly can for their employers. And I say to those employers, if they embark in concerns which are not needed, or should not have been purchased, then they use a large factor in reducing the working-powers of their mines, because they must have interest on their capital; and the result is the decreasing of the wages of the working-classes. Now, we want a settlement, but, as the Hon. George McLean, as representing the Masters' Association, says they are determined to use their right if they think proper as to what employes shall be employed, so we have a right to say we will not endanger our lives with free labourers. If you put a free labourer into a gassy mine, such as there are in the Brunner district, that man comes in, knows nothing about gas, nor anything of the description, and probably by some mishap he ignites the gas, and every man in the mine is blown to "kingdom come"—or to pieces, anyway. These are facts that want looking to. And, in regard to employing free labour in a mine, if they are free labourers they must be skilled labourers. I can vouch for it that at the time of the Westport strike an unskilled man was put into the mine, and one day a safety-lamp was placed in his hand for the safety of the mine. The man knew nothing about the use of a safety-lamp, but he hung another open lamp on his head and carried the safety-lamp along going up into his place to work. The experienced men, however, saw the danger, or the possibility is neither he nor any one else would have lived to tell the tale. This would be employing free labour with a vengeance. That lamp would not have been put into his hand had there not been occasion for it. The places are examined, and if there is gas apparent the men must work with safety-lamps. It must be apparent to every one that if such men go into the mines some disaster will occur, and we have a perfect right to say, if the employers want to engage free labour in working these mines, that if they come to work with us they must be skilled. But in this respect we say we are not going to work with free labour. We have taken up this position, gentlemen, after due consideration, and we refuse to hew coal in order to cut the throats of our fellow-unionists; but should this difficulty be settled there is no one who will have greater pleasure than we shall in supplying the Union Steamship Company with coal, or any other company which they may think proper to send there to take coal from us. But I am sorry to say that before this present dispute came about we were in very little better position than we are in at the present time, because we had seventy or eighty men we were keeping before, and the rest of our men being out at the

* Tyneside Mine.

† S.s. "Oreti."

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.

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

then completed—but our circular was met with decided opposition by the shipowners; and the Maritime Council then came together to see that we had fair-play. And I assert here now, as I honestly believe, that, unless the Maritime Council had been at our back with regard to seeing us righted in that direction, we should never have had the slightest consideration from the Union Steamship Company or any other company in Australasia. This is manifest in the fact that on the other side—as a remark fell from the honourable gentleman this morning—the shipowners there were in a disorganized state, and they themselves failed to make any interest out of the outlay they put forth. It is a known fact in Australia that the shipowners are in a disorganized state, and running their ships not only to the detriment of everybody who has to serve on board those ships, but to the detriment of themselves. They absolutely refused to recognise any demands on the part of the officers. It is not known to me that the Union Steamship Company and the shipowners in New Zealand in any way amalgamated with them, but their attitude led to the belief that they were so; and, with Mr. Millar's permission, I will here read a letter received by him as secretary of the Maritime Council from the Union Steamship Company of New Zealand:—

“SIR,—

“Referring to our several conversations as to the rates we propose paying our officers from the 1st August next, the Steamship Owners' Association have now placed me in a position to deal with the matter, and I enclose a statement showing in tabulated form the demands made by the Officers' Association, and our proposed scale of pay to officers in the various steamers of our fleet.

“There is also under favourable consideration by the directors the question of giving a bonus to chief officers in the first eleven steamers mentioned in the list, equal to £1 per month.

“The Steamship Owners' Association having passed a resolution against the affiliation of the officers with any other labour organizations, we decided to ask them to reconsider this with the view of exempting New Zealand from such resolution, so as to get all maritime labour under one organization. This we have done by cable, and hope to get a favourable answer.

“We agree to pay the wages as proposed on the understanding that such payments shall finally settle the dispute between the Mercantile Marine Officers' Association of New Zealand and ourselves.

“We have not put fourth officers in the schedule, as we are undecided how many we can carry, but those employed will receive £8 a month.

“I am, &c.,

“GEORGE McLEAN.”

You are aware that since the writing of this letter the Hon. Mr. McLean has openly stated and admitted to several of us that he has changed his mind about the affiliation of the officers with the Maritime Council. Here is a copy of a letter [producing letter] in which he says he has been negotiating with the steamship owners on the other side that the officers should be in the Maritime Council, and that all maritime labour should come under one head. This, I submit, is perhaps a policy admissible only on one side of the question. We are not allowed in any way to change our minds, but the shipowners or employers, after making a statement in writing that they are open to this idea and are thoroughly convinced it would be a desirable thing to be brought about, yet when the strife comes they turned round to suit their own ends, and changed their minds. I make this statement because it is obvious on the face of it. Here is a written statement which says that it is apparent to the leading steamship company of New Zealand that the officers should be affiliated with all other bodies. Doubtless there are many other considerations which they have come to possibly beforehand. After making this statement in writing there is a new face put on it when the trouble comes. I submit there has been too much capital made out of the fact of the officers affiliating with the Maritime Council. It would be a long course of detailed circumstances if I were to relate the numerous instances where officers have suffered to a very great extent owing to their not being affiliated with the Maritime Council: there was constant friction existing between the officers and all other bodies. The honourable gentleman referred in his opening address this morning to the fact that they had lost command of their ships. And why was it? For the reason that the officers individually had to fight other organizations. Here was the fact, as has been on all sides admitted. One cannot be accountable for every individual member of a union, as there may be some who will outstep the bounds, and possibly go to extremes. In the instance of one of these unruly members of a union being punished, and dissension afterwards arising, as has happened in the past, an officer, when he stood up for the company, was, owing to the absolute force of the union being behind the other body, put aside without any explanation whatever, to save trouble. And I attach to the Union Steamship Company, or any other shipping company of New Zealand, just as much collusion in the officers affiliating with the Maritime Council as to the officers themselves. The Maritime Council meets once a year; they have delegates from everybody—we send two delegates—and there is no rubbing shoulder to shoulder there. The different organizations have their different rules; they do but meet in common cause, and there is no upsetting of discipline. They do not meet all the year round; they meet on board their ships, but there is not the slightest question of the unionism of the Maritime Council entertained on board the ships. They meet once a year, and only once, and the general public and everybody should know this fact of the case. There has been no rubbing shoulder to shoulder and conniving with the other bodies affiliated with the Maritime Council; and I think the officers themselves on board the ships would, if they were asked, bear that out—that since there has been an association on board the Union Company's ships, before this trouble occurred, there was a better understanding between the officers and the men than hitherto had been the case. There is no doubt there is a great amount of feeling exhibited on both sides. The Hon. Mr. McLean has told us he has come here without any quarrel—he has no quarrel with any one. For my part, then, I must candidly admit I do not know what a quarrel is. He says it takes two to make a quarrel. I certainly know that, and, so far as I am led to understand, there has been an incessant quarrel going on during the last six months. We have been trying to get what is a fair understanding in regard to what should be expected of the ordinary human being; and this has been avoided from time to time until pressure has been brought to bear.

I candidly admit that we ourselves saw that, as an individual association, we were not capable of forcing the thing to an honest settlement. The Maritime Council collectively did that. There is an apparent instance of what combined unionism can do. And in the settlement of this difficulty the Hon. Mr. McLean says he is prepared to meet us in a very affable and amicable spirit; that he has no ill-feeling; there is no quarrel or anything of that: but still he openly asserted in his address that they were determined to keep these free labourers, or the "flower of the labour of New Zealand," on board their ships, in spite of what we might have to say or do. This stand made on the part of the Shipowners' Association—as I presume the Hon. Mr. McLean represents the steamship owners—has been met by assertions from other bodies that they will not work alongside of non-union labour, and just reason, in my mind, has been given for it. In regard to the officers, they have been forced into this position of saying they will not work with non-union labourers; and I can tell the Hon. Mr. McLean that the very men who left the Union Steamship Company's ships in the first instance—because this was not decided upon by one, but by many—the very men who left the ships in Dunedin and some other ports, and would not work with non-union labourers, are the men who are the first to return to their ships, thereby showing the amount of courage and worth which is contained in a body and mind of that sort. The Union Steamship Company is the company we are mainly concerned with in regard to the association; and I may say I take exception to some of the remarks of the Hon. Mr. McLean in this respect: He said they have remained passive, and have done nothing. I have in my possession several telegrams emanating from the Union Steamship Company which are instances of coercion, and they are worded much to this effect: "You must resign from your old and original society, and join the new masters' society." That was to those who resigned their position or who left their ships in the Union Steamship Company. This is only one or two instances which have come to our knowledge. I do not say that they have not their right, as we have, to do their best in order to gain their own ends, but I wish to point out to the different delegates here, in regard to the speech, so well put, plausible and so forth, that on the contrary this is not a child's game we are now entered upon, but it is a question of whether labour, talented or otherwise, is to have its righteous and right recompense in the future. There is no doubt in my mind—nor in any one else's mind who views the matter impartially—that there has been a combined attack by the shipowners and capitalists to crush out the present system of unionism. The shipowners themselves established a union, and in this light they are just as much unionists as we are. They have joined unions, having said, "We will join together and crush out the other machinery"—that is, all those they employ; and I maintain that we have clearly just as much right to join in an association for the mercantile officers to discuss matters for their benefit as the shipowners, or any other employers that may exist. And, further, I would like to point out, as the shipowners say they apprehend, from the fact that the officers have an association, they are going to in some way sever the alliance which exists, or should exist, between the shipowners and officers, that this is the first effort that has ever been made to strengthen the alliance, because the alliance never did exist between them before this. And that is the reason and outcome of this present association. The present Shipmasters' Association, who have sent a letter by their secretary to the Government, saying that, as their interests were identical with the shipowners', they did not think they could attend, are themselves evading the question. It would have been far better if they were here. If their interests are identical with the shipowners', I submit they have shown an act of cowardice in not coming here to support Mr. McLean. I should have liked to have seen representatives of the newly-formed Masters' Association here. It would have given us some opportunity then of asking why this new association was formed. Of course, we have our own imaginations and ideas as to the formation of that association. It is commonly looked upon outside, and I may say, by all nautical men, as having really originated, as I have before stated, with the Union Steamship Company, and got up under the favourable auspices of the directors of that company. There is nothing in the formation of the different associations that will be detrimental to the shipowners. All that they ask is this: that they shall have a fair remuneration for a fair amount of talented labour. Now, it is a well-known fact that there are in existence some shipmasters' associations in Great Britain which are solely governed by the Shipowners' Associations—that is, by the different shipowning companies. I myself belonged to two, and I regret having put my money into them, for no benefit accrued from it. The only benefit which accrued from it is this: that several officers who have been manly enough to go to the Board of these associations, into which they paid money, and express their opinions freely as to the views on board their ship, received shortly afterwards a note from their respective shipowners saying their services were no longer required. There is a sense of boycott in that, and it has existed in the shipowning circle for a long time. We do not claim to act in any way detrimentally to the shipowners' welfare, but all we ask is that they will kindly look into the statements of the officers on board the ships. I do not say the Union Steamship Company is a company which has treated its officers badly. There is no doubt about it, and it has been understood, that the Union Steamship Company is an excellent service. It is well equipped—there is no lack of anything in the store department in regard to the Union Steamship Company, and, in fact, I have no doubt it is one of the best-equipped coastal companies in the world. But what the officers really want is that the directors, or whoever has the power, will look into the vicissitudes through which they have to go. I stated in the papers openly that these officers, who have sometimes worked twenty hours, have gone on from twenty to twenty-six and even thirty hours straight on end; that, in the presence of the eight-hours movement which is revolutionising the whole world, I think the officers have a very just claim to ask the shipowners the number of hours they shall work, the number of hours they shall go on watch, and so forth. We candidly admit it is not as though the officers had to work laboriously with their bodies; we know they have not to do that; if they had to do it, it would be simply a case of lying down with fatigue: but every one knows that, if one has to supervise and be constantly on the spot to watch, it is almost as tiresome and equally tedious. Say an officer has arrived in port in New Zealand at an early hour in the morning—6 or 8 o'clock—and, having

worked all the day, he may have, on the ship's departure, to keep the bridge until 12 o'clock turns; and I am sure that anybody who has had a shop life and so forth, and experiences the pleasures of the eight-hours movement, being able, when 5 o'clock turns, to go home and do just what he pleases, if he were told, after having had his evening meal, to go and keep the bridge in this way, he would feel a great amount of irritation. This is one of the great points of the difficulty between the Shipowners' Association and the officers. In some ships, as we all know, long-voyage officers have three watches. There it is scarcely necessary, for the simple reason that they keep watch-and-watch, and there is no going in and out of ports. It is on the coastal boats that the officers require more rest. There are some instances in which, if the officers' evidence were taken, and the logs we have now in our possession were produced, we could show that the officers have worked, as I say, sometimes eighteen, twenty, or thirty hours at a stretch; and that is against all human endurance, and I assert, sir, that it is inhuman to ask your brother human beings to do that sort of thing without the slightest consideration. In conclusion I may say that the majority of the officers now who are out of their employment—and I believe that there are a big majority of the officers out—they, at a meeting we had in Dunedin before we came north, passed a resolution that they themselves, until the settlement of this difficulty, will not under any circumstances go on board the ships to work with those people who have supplanted other people's places, and those men who have taken their places, on the broad basis of unionist principles. They have unionised themselves together, and they mean to stick together, and will not in any way detract from that principle; and I express strong regret for those men who so far have shown a sense of weakness which I am sure the Union Steamship Company, or any other company, cannot admire in a man. From the fact of these men having left their ships, they must have understood what they left them for. They must have remained out to a certain extent, and then, by pressure, and possibly by such telegrams as one which I have in my possession, you have brought them to reconsider their situation, and to return to their ships. The act of sending out these telegrams is one of coercion and an act of boycott: "If you don't return to your ships you are out of the world altogether." I should like to draw the attention also of the different delegates to the manning of the Union Steamship Company's ships as they are now running. I myself, as a seaman, might safely say that the ships are not manned, nor are they well officered; because there is a clause in the Red Book of the Union Steamship Company which says that they will not take officers over a certain age, and I see some very old, Methuselah sort of officers in the employ of the Union Steamship Company now. And I can substantiate what Mr. Millar said: when going up in the "Te Anau" the sailors there were all adrift and did not know what they were doing, and one person in particular who was referred to as the son of a resident in Wellington, who certainly had no more the appearance of a sailor than one of these chairs has, was placed in the important position of driving the winch, in which he was supported by the chief engineer, who gave him constant instructions as to which way he should turn the handle, and so forth.—(Laughter.)—As I say, in conclusion, we have met together here in this Conference in the hope that something will be done by way of a settlement. And, as Mr. Brown has said, it is affecting both sides. There is no doubt about it. Independently of what Mr. McLean has said, there is a great amount of feeling. It is all very well for him to say that he owes us no animosity, or no quarrel, or anything of that sort—it is all very well to say that, but we must express the broad fact that there is a quarrel, and that there is something to settle, and the sooner we come to the main point at issue and face the broad facts of the case the better.

Mr. Millar: Referring to the last remark of Captain Highman's, I was not present at the early part of the Conference, in the morning, and I did not know that Mr. McLean had said he had no quarrel. If there is no struggle, if there is no quarrel, what are we here for, I should like to know? If there is no quarrel it is idle our sitting here, because there is nothing to settle. If the whole thing is going on, and they have ample men, and do not require our services, what are we here for? I fail to see the necessity of sitting here any longer if this is the position.

The Chairman: You must bear in mind that we are here at the invitation of the Government, and, of course, the Government acknowledges that there is a quarrel, even if both sides represented here do not; and the Government brought us together for the purpose of getting us to exchange views in the hope that we might adopt some conciliatory course. So far some good has been done by the discussion, and, if it continues in the same strain, I feel confident we shall come to some understanding.

Mr. R. P. Johnson: I am sure Captain Highman has scarcely interpreted what Mr. McLean either meant or said. I am rather anxious that we should get out of this present aspect. Mr. McLean's chief point, as I take it, was this: "I have no personal quarrel with anybody; I do not intend to quarrel with any one; it takes two to make a quarrel, and I will not be one in a quarrel." Mr. McLean, I take it, was speaking of his personal presence as against twenty-five other people here.

Captain Highman: I take exception to the remarks made by the last speaker. Mr. McLean is here representing a body. Letters read here show that he is representing the Northern Steamship Company and the Union Steamship Company. I am not in any way addressing the Hon. Mr. McLean personally, but simply as a delegate from the particular companies he is here to represent.

Mr. Millar: I may explain that I said those few words just now because I understood the very fact of our sitting here, and of Mr. McLean's coming here, recognises that there is something to settle. That was the reason I rose. I have no desire to burke conversation.

Mr. Hutcheson: I am sorry any feeling of irritation should come into our discussion, and I should like to recall members' attention to the fact that the Hon. Mr. McLean certainly prefaced his remarks with the desire that we should not fall out, because he said "I am not going to quarrel; you know it takes two to quarrel" more by way of remark, as I understood it.

Mr. Johnson: A mere personal expression.

Captain Highman : Then, I submit, what is the present state of the country if there has not been a quarrel? Undoubtedly there has been a quarrel, and, I submit, the sooner we face the broad issue that there is a quarrel, and that there is something to mediate upon, the better.—(Hear, hear.)—It is all very well to come here and say that there is no quarrel; but if we all said that we might as well disperse. There is no logic in the remark. I fail to see it. The country now is thrown almost into a state of absolute standstill; the Government of the country, to whom we have to look for legislation for the country, instructs its Executive to call a Conference to mediate upon this difficulty, and we are here assembled. Only one of the other side comes here, and I must say I admire—and it commands the admiration of every one here—the pluck of that one company in coming here and facing the difficulty.—(Hear, hear.)—The others, as I have said in my opening remarks, and I am extremely sorry to say it, are wanting in courtesy, even if they have no quarrel. At the invitation of the Government, to whom they look up, or are supposed to look up, they have thought fit to play sulky and not come here. This is the attitude they have taken: They have played the sulky part in not responding to the Government of the country; and I should almost move a resolution that the combined associations of employers otherwise than the Union Steamship Company show, by their act of not responding to the invitation of the Government of the country, a want of confidence in that Government.

The Chairman : We will take that resolution after we have done with the present discussion. Would you like to say something on the subject, Mr. Lomas?

Mr. Lomas : I am afraid, sir, that I can scarcely add anything to what has been already said to-day. I take it, sir, that the chief discussion of the meeting ought to rest between the representatives of the Marine Officers' Association and the representative of the Seamen's Union and the Hon. Mr. McLean.—(Hear, hear.)—In regard to the coal-mine difficulty, I was rather sorry to see Mr. McLean go so far out of his way as to bring in, as I thought, side-issues. He dragged into this present discussion the difficulty which arose between the Grey Valley Coal Company and their miners some time ago. Mr. McLean knows the ins and outs of that difficulty as well as I do, and he also knows that when they submitted their books to be inspected, four days before the result of the investigation by our auditor in Dunedin reached us, the company itself threw the men out. And probably if the company had not taken that rash step, but had allowed the men to work on until the results came from Dunedin, the men might have made some compromise, pending the final decision in the matter. It was rather unnecessary to go over that ground, for the reason that myself and my colleague came down to Wellington for the purpose of conferring with Mr. McLean and Mr. Kennedy, as representing that company, and did our very best, eventually succeeding in getting the men to compromise matters pending a Royal Commission, which is likely to sit. It is rather out of place to bring that matter before the Conference, seeing that it is a side-issue. As to our position as coal-miners in this matter, we could do nothing else than stand loyally by the seamen, and I am not ashamed to confess that I regard our affiliation in this colony as essential. I do not see, as a single union, how we could hold our own against the capitalists; and we have resolved that we are going to be on the defensive. We have no wish, as far as I know—and no one can charge me, as the recognised leader of the miners, in any case, of attempting to take any undue advantage of any employers I have had to do with. My employers generally give me credit for being fair and reasonable in most matters. I cannot see how we could possibly hold our own unless affiliated; and we are not going to sit down and allow the Union Company, or any other powerful company, to quietly break up our ranks; and for us to go on working to supply the Union Company with coal would be to assist that company and the free labourers to crush us out of existence. We have no feeling in the matter whatever with our own company, and we do not wish to create any feeling. If the Union Company's boats, and other boats, were manned with union men to-morrow we would go back to work, and work on the old terms. As to free labour, I confess I have not much to say about it, and do not care much about it. I am not at all alarmed about free labour. I have had a good deal of experience of free labourers, and they are, to my mind, the very best friends of unionism. If the Union Company only has as long an experience of free labour as many other companies have had I am certain that they will take their old hands back, and they will find that it will be more profitable in the end. Mr. McLean can ascertain from the Westport Coal Company how far these free labourers—they are called blacklegs, and it is a better term too—(Hear, hear)—how far these free labourers assisted them in the dispute some five years ago. They had the mine full of these men, and the result was they lost considerably, and if it had not been for the assistance of the Union Steamship Company that company would have gone down. My experience all my life has been that these men know what to do with the companies, and know how to get at them; and, so far as the free labourers are concerned, I am not alarmed at their taking the places of the seamen and of the wharf labourers. I hail their presence at Westport with delight.—(Laughter.)—I say that sincerely, because as long as the mine is closed and there is no one working the struggle will last the longer. Our company lost very little money indeed until those free labourers entered the mine during the last strike. The free labourers will get the worst of it if this fight continues. I know our men can stand, and stand under very great difficulties; and I am pretty certain we shall stand quietly by the seamen until the end of the strike, no matter whether it is a bitter end or a sweet one. I do not say that we wish to hold anything like a sword of terror over the head of the Union Company in any way. I am disposed to be conciliatory about the matter; and I am sure that the fact of the delegates coming so readily at the invitation of the Government shows a disposition on their parts to meet this thing fairly and squarely and discuss it on its merits. Because we would not consent in the first place to give ourselves entirely away to the other side before we came to Wellington they would not come here and meet us. That will make us all the more determined to fight this matter to the end. It seems to me that the question before this Conference is a question between the Shipping Company and the Seamen's Union and the Marine Officers and us delegates. I do not think we should take much part in the discussion unless the representatives of the particular industry we are interested

in were here to discuss it with us. I regret the absence of the Railway Commissioners, because the invitation of the House of Representatives was the invitation of the country. It was not the Government, but the House of Representatives, who, by the large majority of the votes of the country, requested the Government to invite us to come to this Conference. They are not here, and it is a slight on the country at large that they are not here to meet the representatives of the railway servants, seeing that there is a dispute between them. I only wish to say this: that I do not see why we should be asked to work with non-union men. Our experience in the past has been that our greatest source of weakness has arisen from the fact that we have had to contend against powerful capitalists, and against those who were supposed to be their friends and our enemies, who will work at any price. If we are to work with non-unionists the sooner we are all non-unionists the better. The only chance of protecting ourselves against unreasonable demands is by being thoroughly united and standing shoulder to shoulder. I would rather see all the organizations in the colony going to pieces than see us consent to work with non-unionist men. As far as the men are concerned, they will not do it if they have to leave the colony; they will not submit in any case to work with non-union men; and if the worst comes to the worst they will have to leave the matter to be fought out between the miners and the seamen, and we are just able to do it.

Mr. Hoban: The present discussion seems to have taken the form of explanation between both sides—the Union Steamship Company on the one side and the Maritime Council on the other. My colleagues and myself, representing the Railway Servants' Society, are perhaps out of place in making remarks on this occasion, seeing that we know little about the dispute except what we can gather from those present; and therefore in the dispute itself, perhaps, we are not competent to express an opinion. But I should like to make one or two remarks, sir, in regard to the absence of the employers at the meeting to-day. I agree with the speakers who have preceded me that their action in this matter is to be regretted, because, as Mr. Lomas justly remarked, the House of Representatives, representing as they do the whole of the people of the colony, have requested that the Government should call a Conference of employers and employés, that they might meet here and discuss the question. A certain portion of the public have been altogether against the employés, because, they say, "You are trying to prolong this struggle," and the employers have taken very good care to spread this feeling amongst the public; but the presence of the representatives of the employés here to-day shows that the employés themselves are only too anxious to settle it if they can with honour to themselves. The action of the employers is to a certain extent one that cannot be looked upon with credit to themselves. If we look at the letter received from the Wellington Employers' Association, in which it is stated that it contains the opinion of the whole of the employers' associations throughout the colony, we cannot think that they have considered the position from an outside point of view. Right throughout it seems to be devoted to one side of the question.

The Chairman: It is written by Wright.

Mr. Hoban: Yes; it was written by Wright, but I think he is a little bit wrong.—(Laughter.)—The expressions therein were such as should not have come from men of intelligence or fair-minded men. He says that when the men were called out—this is from the employers' association—they expressed complete satisfaction. He (Mr. Wright) then makes certain statements as to "the tyranny of the leaders of these organizations" in calling these men out. There was no tyranny exercised; they were asked by their officer, Mr. Millar, to come out. He said, "It is necessary for you to come out, because the Union Steamship Company have joined the Shipowners' Association, and are therefore acting in opposition to you;" and the men came out. Where was the tyranny in this? The men were only too anxious themselves to come out. Then the letter goes on to say that, beyond dispute, the present state of affairs has been brought about by the men themselves, and has been forced upon the employers. I am reading this to show you what must have been in their minds' eye when writing this letter—how unprejudiced they seem to be, or would seem to be in their own minds, in writing it in this form. They go on to say they cannot consent to sacrifice free labour, and that the restrictions placed on the employés by the union are inimical to the interests of the employers. The parties are, I gather from the dispute, the Union Steamship Company and the Maritime Council, and Mr. Millar stated here that the Maritime Council have done everything in their power to forward the interests of the Union Company in every shape and form; and this to a certain extent the company admits. Whenever a dispute has taken place Mr. Millar, as representing the Maritime Council and the Seamen's Union, has done everything in his power to settle the matter satisfactorily to both sides, and even in the question of demurrage the Maritime Council have put their hands into their own pockets and paid for the loss occasioned through their own men's fault. Can we say that the union in this case has been detrimental to the interests of the Union Steamship Company? Then, again, as to the entrance-fee, Mr. Millar stated distinctly, amongst other reasons, that this fee of £2 was imposed to prevent the men leaving home and foreign vessels and taking vessels here. There is another proof that the union considered the interests of the employers. And furthermore—Mr. McLean will bear me out in this statement—there has been so far the greatest good feeling between the employés and employers; and if the union had done no good, do you think there would have been that good feeling between the employés and the employers? When there was no union at all, was there good feeling? You found men grumbling because they had not sufficient pay; but when they got unions they became satisfied in this respect, and if the unions are as fair in the future as they have been in the past no one can complain about them. The Hon. Mr. McLean says every time there was a dispute they framed new rules, and in these new rules there were demands for increased pay; but, if these demands were unjust, why did the Union Company grant them? Then another point as to the restrictions: If the Union Steamship Company were so desirous of putting down these unions, why did they in the first place consent to all their men being union men? It shows you that the company must have thought themselves, "It is to our interest. We shall have competent men if they belong to the union." This clause in the employers' letter is not what

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.

Mr. Winter: The statement that there is no quarrel in New Zealand seems to me so utterly absurd that I should not refer to it were it not for the fact that it is continually brought up times out of number and harped upon and dwelt upon until a large number of people are induced to believe that there really is no quarrel. So far from there being no quarrel, I think thousands and thousands of people are painfully aware that something has considerably gone wrong in New Zealand, and you can only draw one conclusion—that it has gone wrong because capital and labour have quarrelled. Now, I think the real object of this Conference has scarcely been touched upon this afternoon. The real object is to arrive at some satisfactory basis of settlement in this quarrel. So far there have been simply accusations and refutations; it has been a sort of duel between the Union Steamship Company and the maritime officers. That, I consider, was almost absolutely necessary as a preliminary, leading up to the real object of this Conference. Before I go any further I might indorse the remarks of previous speakers as to the absence of employers. I sincerely regret that none of the rest of the employers of labour have seen fit to be represented here to-day, and if the Conference proves a failure, if no good result is derived from it, those capitalists and employers in the colony who are not represented here to-day must bear the whole of the blame. To say they are satisfied with the existing state of things seems to me criminal, because we are all agreed upon this: that the present state of things is not conducive to the well-being of the country at large. And if there is a way of effecting a settlement—if there is a mode by which the two opposing parties can meet and arrange an amicable settlement of the difficulty—I think it is the equal duty of the employers and capitalists to come and make advances as it is for the labour side to make advances. They should have been here to hear what we had to say, tried to refute our arguments, produced their own arguments, and endeavoured to convince us of them, and by mutual agreement we would no doubt have arrived at a satisfactory conclusion. However, as they are not here, I presume we shall have to do our best under very difficult conditions. We want to find out first, before we introduce other questions, what was the real object of bringing on this present struggle. When you come to review the matter dispassionately one cannot arrive at any other conclusion than that the thing must have been to a considerable extent premeditated. At least, as far as I am concerned, I can come to no other conclusion than this: that proper plans were laid down long before the thing came to an actual issue. It seems to me, as to the statement of the Hon. Mr. McLean, that his company had arrived at the conclusion that it was time they regained command of their own boats—that this sentiment has been at the bottom of this struggle. Employers of labour and capitalists in general have found that unionism was gaining ground so rapidly, and, through our affiliation with each other, was becoming so strong, that in a very short time it would be almost irresistible, and the object evidently was to crush this thing before it became too powerful to be crushed by any means. And when you consider the systematic manner in which we were all pushed into it, and the systematic manner in which employers of labour combined so rapidly to assist in the matter, one cannot arrive at any other conclusion than that premeditation was resorted to beforehand. I have never heard of any one society or union that admit that they were not drawn into this quarrel partly against their will. The Maritime Council admit that they were pushed into it, and the other unions admit that they were simply drawn into it because they had to assist the Maritime Council from a unionist point of view. The Railway Servants' Society was unquestionably drawn into it for the same reason. And here we have all got into the meshes of this struggle; and the meshes were drawn around us by the capitalists and employers of labour for a purpose, and that purpose was to crush individual unionism, or, if not to crush individual unionism, it was affiliated unionism, which they knew in a short time they could not compete with. Now, let us ask if unionism is desirable for the good of the community. We have heard from the various employers that they admit that unionism has done a certain amount of good; and, when we consider the matter a little while, we can easily conclude that it has done good. We simply ask the question, are the conditions of the wage-earners better now than they were before unionism became a power in the land? and we must at once admit, and all the employers must at once admit, that unionism has done something, and, indeed, a good deal, towards bettering the condition of the workers. If unionism is good and has done good, if from a moral aspect it is desirable, why should it be crushed? Why, if the thing is good, should it not develop and spread itself all over the land, and should we not raise its power so that we could get the maximum amount of good from it? And is not the affiliation of unionism the only way in which unionism can gain its maximum strength? If employers and capitalists are desirous of seeing the condition of the masses improved, they should, instead of crushing affiliated unionism, foster and assist it, and the employers' unions and labour unions should meet together, sit in solemn conclave, and aim at bettering the condition of the people. Unfortunately, this is not the case with us here this afternoon. The employers hold aloof and say, "If you have a quarrel—if you want us to come to you, you must first of all commit suicide, and then we will come and talk to you." How much talk there would be in a man when he has committed suicide, I will leave you to imagine. I feel, sir, that where the other side are to blame is in this: that they do not meet us in a kindly spirit. They say, in fact, "You had no right to set yourselves up as a power; you should have submitted to our dictation." They deny our right to be in existence or have power as a union. The conditions laid down, it is plain on the face of it, are simply to negative unionism to the fullest extent. The strength of unionism at present lies in the fact that it refuses to work with non-union labour. There are some societies who have not adopted that rule, and find they can work without it; but in such societies as those of the miners, seamen, and wharf-labourers they find it indispensable to maintain their power that they should not work, except under certain restrictions, with non-union labour. The capitalists and employers will tell us that, if we say to a man, "You must become a unionist or you shall not be allowed to earn your living in the same manner as unionists," it is interfering with the liberty of the subject. We do not say that he must not earn his living in any way whatever because he is not a unionist; we only tell him he must not seek his living in such a way as will interfere with those who are unionists. In endeavouring to obtain our own comfort,

pleasure, or anything else, we should do so in such a way that we do not interfere in any way with the pleasure and comfort of others; and that is all we ask of non-union labour. If they wish to be "free," as they term themselves, we are quite agreeable, only we wish to get this from them: that unionism has done an immense amount of good for the working-class as a whole; they are a portion of the working-class; and if they do not recognise that unionism, and if they turn round and work directly in opposition to the best interests of that unionism, they are renegades and not true workmen, for unionism has benefited them, although they were non-unionists, to almost the same extent as it has benefited the unionists themselves. The whole condition of labour has been raised to a higher level by unionism, and we do not put anything unreasonable when we ask a man to come and pay his quota by way of subscription and entrance-fee towards establishing unionism on a firm basis and keeping it there. As far as interfering with individual liberty is concerned, there is no such thing as entire individual liberty. If we all had that right and claimed it we could all be drunkards, thieves, murderers, and whatever our passions and desires would lead us to. But here are a portion of society supposed to work for the welfare of the whole, and they say, in the interests of society you must not have individual liberty to the fullest extent, but we must restrain you in such a way that you will not interfere with the welfare of the community. Unionists say, "We will only interfere so far as it may have an effect on the well-being of the majority of the workers." We merely ask them to be unionists, or to allow us the privilege of refusing to work with them. Wherever a society finds it indispensable to enforce that rule, it should be regarded as a vital principle by both unionists and employers, and should not be infringed; but where there are societies who can very well work with them—where there is a possibility of unionist and non-unionist labour working together—very great benefit might be derived, because the unionists might by mere moral suasion bring the non-unionists round to their own way of thinking; to lead them to see that it is necessary for the welfare of the community that all should be unionists, and combine to form one solid body for the purpose of resisting all attempts to frustrate the aim we have in endeavouring to raise and improve the condition of the labouring-classes. As far as the railways, of which I am a representative, are concerned, I would rather not speak on that subject, as I hope our Commissioners will be here to-morrow. They have not definitely refused, as far as I gather from what has been read to us this afternoon, to come here, and until they do so I shall abstain from saying anything in connection with the Railway Servants' Society. When they are here, and can answer anything I state, I shall in all probability launch out.

Mr. Sandford moved that the Conference should adjourn until 10 o'clock the following morning.

Mr. Seymour seconded the motion.

Mr. Meyer: I beg to move an amendment. I may say that I am more than surprised that none of the other employers have accepted the invitation sent to them by the Government, because I heard on very good authority that several large employers in this city have expressed a wish that they could meet the various bodies implicated in this struggle, so as to point out to them how they could carry on this unionism with greater advantage to themselves and also to their employers. And no one here was more surprised than myself when I saw it in the paper, and that it came from Mr. Wright, that the employers considered they had no quarrel; yet, in the very next sentences they ask us what lines we are prepared to lay down as a basis of settlement. It seems strange that they should ask us to formulate anything whatever as a basis of settlement if they have no quarrel with us. Now, I am afraid, sir, if this Conference does not end with mutual advantage to both sides, instead of a lot of men going back to work, we shall have in a week or two eight or nine thousand more men out of employment, because it is impressed upon the men's minds that this quarrel is not with the Union Steamship Company, but with the whole of the capitalists of New Zealand. And I think I am right in stating that many men who came out of work in the first instance did not know what they came out for, although the great majority of them knew. But the few who did not understand what they came out for in the first instance fully understand it now, and the very men who were "shaky" about going back a week after they came out are the most determined to stand out until they have had their rights recognised so far that they shall band themselves into unions or associations for their mutual benefit. I would move as an amendment, sir, "That this meeting adjourns until 2 o'clock to-morrow afternoon, with the hope that in the meantime the employers may see their way clear to attend this Conference." I am positive if they do attend good will come out of it; and if they do not attend harm will come out of it, because, as one speaker remarked just now, unionism will never be crushed out. They have tried in all ways to crush it out in the past, and every time it has sprung up again with renewed vigour, and so it will go on until the worker gains what he is seeking—that is, freedom. Until such time capital will always be at war with labour instead of being friends with it; because no man with any common-sense can ever think that labour is going to enjoy any benefit whatever without capital, nor can capital enjoy much without labour. And, as to the presence of the Hon. Mr. McLean, we cannot help admiring him for the stand he has taken in the matter, and it bears out the old saying they have in Scotland, that the bigger or more numerous the foe the stouter their hearts are. I believe that if we got the other side here it would tend to bring about a better understanding between the Maritime Council and the other side now involved in this struggle, and that is my reason for moving the adjournment of the Conference until 2 o'clock to-morrow, in the hope that the employers may see their way clear to be represented here.

The Chairman: That really is a motion extending an invitation to employers to act independently in this city, and come to this Conference to-morrow. If that is your desire, I would ask you to move a motion directly to that effect, and not incorporate it with a motion for adjournment. If the motion for adjournment is put and carried, the employers will not be aware of any invitation being extended to them.

Mr. Meyer : Sooner than be a party to trying to induce the employers to be present here, if I am not out of order, I would, with your consent, sir, withdraw all I have said, because they have had an invitation extended to them, and if they do not see their way clear to accept it it is not our business to press the matter on them or urge them to come here; and I hope the remark made in the Premier's letter that we urged them to be present will be contradicted. We simply asked that an invitation should be sent to them.

The Chairman here read a letter from the Premier's office as follows :—

"SIR,—
"Premier's Office, Wellington, 2nd October, 1890.
"With reference to my letter of this day's date, I now forward to you copy of the letter I addressed to the Chief Commissioners of Railways, and of his reply, which has just reached me.

"I have, &c.,
"D. P. Fisher, Esq.,
"Chairman of the Labour Conference."
"H. A. ATKINSON.

Enclosure No. 1.

"SIR,—
"Premier's Office, Wellington, 2nd October, 1890.
"I have the honour to transmit to you copy of a letter just received from the Chairman of the Labour Conference.

"The Government did not in the first instance think it their duty to invite you to attend the Conference, being of opinion that you did not come within the scope of the resolution passed by the House of Representatives; but they will raise no objection to your attending the Conference if you think your presence will assist in bringing to a satisfactory end the unfortunate strikes which exist at the present time.

"I have, &c.,
"J. McKerrow, Esq.,
"Chief Commissioner of Railways, &c."
"H. A. ATKINSON.

Enclosure No. 2.

"SIR,—
"New Zealand Government Railways,
"Head Office, Wellington, 2nd October, 1890.
"I have the honour to acknowledge your letter of this date, and a copy of the letter to you from the Chairman of the Labour Conference requesting you to invite the Railway Commissioners to attend the Conference, and to urge the Commissioners to accept such invitation.

"In reply, I have to state that the Commissioners, representing as they do so important a branch of the public service as the railways, feel it imperatively incumbent on them and their employes to maintain the strictest neutrality in any trade or labour disputes which may arise, and they therefore beg to decline the invitation of the Labour Conference.

"I have, &c.,
"The Hon. the Premier, Wellington."
"JAMES MCKERROW,
"Chief Commissioner.

The motion of Mr. Sandford—Mr. Meyer's amendment not being seconded—was then put and carried.

At 4.30 p.m. the Conference adjourned until 10 o'clock next day.

FRIDAY, 3RD OCTOBER, 1890.

The Conference assembled at 10 o'clock a.m.

Present : Mr. Ansell, Mr. Avery, Mr. Boase, Mr. Browett, Mr. P. Brown, Mr. Cornish, Mr. Dobson, Mr. Elvines, Mr. D. P. Fisher (Chairman), Mr. J. Graham, Captain Highman, Mr. Hoban, Mr. Hutcheson, Mr. R. P. Johnson, Mr. H. C. Jones, Mr. Lomas, Mr. Meyer, the Hon. G. McLean, Mr. J. A. Millar, Mr. F. C. Millar, Mr. T. Mills, Mr. Mudge, Mr. Parker, Mr. Sandford, Mr. R. Seymour, Mr. Tees, Mr. Williams, Mr. Winter.

Mr. Sandford : It appears to me that the main question which has been discussed by the Conference has been confined to the maritime difficulty. Regret has been expressed by two or three members of the Conference on account of the absence of employers from its deliberations. That regret, I believe, is fully indorsed by all the representatives here. But it seems to me that the delegates on the labour side have not given the consideration it deserves to the reason which the employers may have had for declining to attend the Conference. There must have been a reason for their coming to that resolution. In the letters from the employers which have been read they appear to require that the unions shall give up the whole of the rights, or the principal right, for which they are contending. Now, we contend that for the employers' associations to ask the labour party to abandon such a vital principle without any discussion of it is unreasonable. The labour party might with just as much reason have asked, before we entered upon the Conference, that all the persons discharged, or who had left their employment, should be reinstated. Had such a demand been made by the labour party it would have been cried down not only as unreasonable but unwarrantable, and would have put an end to any proposals for a Conference. Fortunately, the labour party did not take any such extreme view. We hold that, having been invited to this Conference—the same invitation which we in good faith accepted—to settle, if possible, every question that might be raised—this question of unionism and non-unionism among others—they should have attended or been represented here. We were prepared to consider the whole of these questions, and the responsibility of the present opportunity being lost will not rest with us. Now, it appears to me that the employers take up one of two positions—either they fear that their position is untenable, and therefore they cannot come forward to discuss it, knowing they would have to admit that we had right on our side, or they are determined to crush unionism. Not to talk about

matters of detail, whatever the outcome of this struggle, we have every right to regard this Conference as a decided victory for the labour party. We have come here from the North, the South, and the two Coasts, and I must say it shows but scant courtesy to the Parliament and the Government of the colony that the representatives of enormous interests within it should have decided not to be present, even though they might have resolved to take no part in the debates, but only to hear the argument. Seeing, however, that the employers have abstained from coming here, we have only this one way of meeting them. Here we would have been enabled to discuss all the important questions connected with this movement. To go on to platforms throughout the colony we could only have met the employers in sections, and we should be probably told that the meetings where we appeared would be packed with unionists; the arguments would be restricted by some special or local circumstances, and "boiled down," to use a technical phrase, before they appeared before the public. The only fitting opportunity is here, before the Government of the country, where one can depend on full and fair reports by Government reporters, who are ready to give the public the full benefit of these reports. Now, gentlemen, I say that the position taken up by the employers' associations, or, shall I say, the capitalists, that union and non-union labour shall work together indiscriminately, is unsound; that such a position is inimical to the best interests not only of labour but of the employer. And for these reasons: Why does unionism exist? Primarily, no doubt, it exists to advance the interests of the labourer—for the purpose of conserving those interests—the results of its action fixing the hours of labour, appointing the rates of wages, and in other ways relieving the burden which the labourer has to bear, and, if you please, to save him from unwise competition in his own ranks. So far so good. The position which the labourer has gained he is fairly entitled to. He has gained it chiefly, if not altogether, through unionism. But does the work of unionism end there? I hold that it does not. If capital could only look on the whole question of unionism, the capitalists would find it as much for their interests as for the interests of the worker that there should be a full recognition of the claims of unionism; that, in effect, there should be a strong unionism throughout the land. And why? Putting it on the ordinary basis of common-sense, given a regulated scale of wages, regulated hours of labour, the capitalist would be in a position to know exactly, in respect of any undertaking he might think of entering upon, the cost which the labour would be to him, and he would know at the same time that none of those who are to compete with him in his particular business will obtain any advantage over him so far as wages or so far as the first cost in the matter of labour is concerned. Therefore I contend the capitalist ought to do all in his power to insist that every employé should be a member of a union. Let us now look to the question of the "freedom of contract," which makes the extent of a man's need and the extent of an employer's greed the sole rule which regulates the rates of wages and the hours of labour. And what of them? With most employers who go into contracts the men who are in their employment are not in particularly needy circumstances. The men may have been in the same employment for a great many years. Look at the Union Company, for instance: they have men in their employment to whom they give a fair remuneration. But let us say there is a manufacturer next door who has men in his employment of a needy class. Things occur from time to time which induce him to think that if he could get work done at a very low rate of wages he would be in a better position to contract than his neighbour who pays a fair remuneration to labour. He goes to his men and says to them, "Look here, men: work is not brisk just now, and if I cannot get that contract you will have to travel." But a contract comes along, and he says again, "Here is a contract, but to enable me to take it you must either take longer hours or lower rates of wages." That is how it is. Every man says, "If I can assist my employer to retain his business I also benefit myself," and for the sake of getting a present advantage he will often sacrifice what he may think is the main principle which should govern his action, the principle of right and justice. He accepts a lower rate of wages. In doing that he agrees to help the employer who takes advantage of his necessity, and he enables that employer to go into the market and contract for work for less than the fair and upright man who deals honourably by his men can take; so that the fair-dealing employer, as well as the most efficient workmen, are kept out of the race. And every member of the community suffers as a consequence, so that in time there is but little work to do, and that little is usurped by the unscrupulous contractor, the needy and incompetent workman, to the exclusion of fair dealing and good work. That is what freedom of contract leads to. It comes to this sooner or later—there can be no other result: that if one employer takes this position it becomes necessary even for the fair employer to do one of three things—he must adopt the same tactics and reduce wages, or lengthen the hours of labour, or recede from his business. Regarding these things, I say it is undoubtedly the interest of capital to see that we have a strong and united unionism. If freedom of contract to-day has to accept a lower rate of wages to secure a present advantage it is morally certain that the unprincipled employer, who has persuaded the worker to take this lower rate now, will in the long-run be in a position to insist that the workman shall take a lower rate still. Owing to this want of principle in the employer, and this submission of the worker to freedom of contract, which is against him, services have no longer their proper value, until at last the employer says to him, "Here you are; you are cut adrift from your fellow-men; it is no use looking to them for assistance; I want a still further reduction of your wages." Thus, under this freedom of contract, every working-man, every labouring-man, and every working-woman must eventually come down to their ruin—must, at any rate, be reduced to such a low level that long hours and low wages shall have placed them in a worse position than the men and women workers of the Old Country. We are told by the employers' associations that they have no desire to destroy the unions; they are quite content to have the old unionism; but the new unionism must be strangled at any cost. I have taken the trouble to read the history of unionism, and I know what the old unionism was: and in the popular literature of a very recent time its character and objects have been described. If the employers' associations are acquainted with the history of the past, even up to a very recent date, they will have no difficulty in informing themselves

of its real nature. Let them get Charles Reade's book, "Put Yourself in his Place," and read that for an exposition of what old unionism was, and then say whether they prefer rattening, fire-raising, and murder to the new unionism, which, rightly understood and carried out, promotes confidence, mutual respect, and mutual agreement. It is time the meaning of this cry against new unionism for old unionism should be known throughout the length and breadth of the land. Those who write these letters about the "new unionism" are entirely unacquainted with its rules or its system; they utterly fail to appreciate what it means at the present time. What is it that the capitalist is afraid of? A federated unionism? We are told, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly, but no matter which, that in this dispute capital feared the affiliation of the Officers' Association with the Seamen's Union. Now, let me put this position to the capitalist: Does he object to an alliance, defensive and offensive, between any two nations? Will he tell us that, because England and some other power are allied, therefore, in every-day life, there must be alliance between the people of one and the other; that in all commercial transactions they must consult each other; that in Germany, in their social movements, they are going to have an influence on England? Now, this is the position which the Shipowners' Association take up in regard to their officers: that, because there is an alliance between the Marine Officers' Association and the Maritime Council, therefore that alliance must interfere with every-day business. Look at the matter calmly; the thing is absurd on its face. The same thing that holds on the larger question should also hold in the minor position. There is not the slightest ground for fear in regard to this trouble on account of federated unionism. The whole position of federated labour is this: that it leaves with every minor power to deal with individual questions—to say that, if an organized attack is made on any one of the sections, the whole body of unionists will resist any such attack. Here is a case in point: The Shipowners' Association have organized an attack upon the Maritime Council. The Union Steamship Company have deliberately joined in that attack—

Hon. Mr. McLean: No.

Mr. Sandford: I know that Mr. McLean will differ from what I say in this; but I shall cite the testimony of Mr. McLean, who is the Union Company, upon the point. In the first place, the meeting at Albury represented the views of the whole of the shipowners of Australia. At that meeting an understanding was come to on certain lines. No understanding was come to in regard to fixing up the difficulty that had arisen, but a lock-out was agreed upon.

Hon. Mr. McLean: The lock-out was long before; there was no understanding for a lock-out come to.

Mr. Sandford: I will read from the telegraphic report what happened: "One result of the Conference at Albury has been to bring about a better understanding between the intercolonial companies than at present exists. It is expected, in consequence, that a considerable amount of tonnage will be laid up, the effect of which will be to throw a large number of men out of employment." Now, if that does not show that the shipowners and the Union Company had decided anything, whatever was to be the result of the strike or the matter in dispute, they could entirely agree in this: that they were going to have a considerable difficulty with the labour party. Now for the Union Company's manifesto: "The directors have no alternative left but to fall in with the resolutions of the Steamship Owners' Association and other employers of labour, and to support them to the utmost of their power in opposing the encroachments of the labour unions by every possible means." In view of this, did the Union Steamship Company deliberately ally itself to the Shipowners' Association, which had declared it had for its prime object the crushing of the unions? Those extracts which I have read speak for themselves. Now, in regard to the Hon. Mr. McLean's remarks yesterday, he told us, we know, with the greatest truth, and the greatest candour—and I for one admire his conduct all through this matter—he told us candidly that union and non-union labour had worked together on the company's boats. He might have stopped there. But he admits that this was only allowed until union men could be obtained. The union knew that cases must arise where it would be a suicidal policy in all circumstances to prevent union and non-union labour working together. If a ship were short-handed it was necessary to allow union men to go to sea with the non-union man, who would make up her complement; but for the Union Company to say that, because the unions showed common-sense and forbearance—because they showed a desire not to inconvenience the shipowner or the public, because the unions gave this permission to work with a non-union man—that action constituted a principle for foregoing all our rights, and enabling them to say, further, "That is a reason for allowing us (the Union Company) to do just as we please," surely that was a most unreasonable position for them to take up. Mr. McLean again says, "Employés are entitled to take their fair share of the product of their labour." I acknowledge that we have no right, if employers are making only 15 per cent., to demand that they should pay us at the rate of 16 per cent. I go with Mr. McLean in saying that the employer has a right to a fair share; but I also say that unionism has for one of its advantages that it gets for the employer a fair return for his capital. Mr. McLean also told us yesterday that the Union Company were forced into their union with the Shipowners' Association. Granted; but by whom? The shipowners had no power to say, "You shall enter with us upon this war for the annihilation of unionism." Unless the Shipowners' Association had some power behind them which they could shake at the head of the Union Company they could do nothing. They said, "If you do not assist us in this struggle with the Australian strike we will see that the monopoly of trade with New Zealand held by the Union Company shall cease." No doubt they had the power in that way of jeopardizing the whole industry of this colony and paralysing trade. But Mr. McLean tells us he—the Union Company—had no alternative. I think I can show that he had an alternative. Why was not a Conference accepted at the beginning of the trouble? When the struggle continued, and blood was spilt, there was this alternative of a Conference—the alternative which this new unionism held out as practical and desirable from the commencement of the dispute. We said, "Meet us in Conference; let us have a board of arbitration; we, the labour party, are prepared to abide by the result of arbitration." That was the principle which was held by this unionism that is now so much decried,

Mr. McLean has told us that there must be a give-and-take principle in all trade, and I presume between employers and workers. Granted; if all employers were "give-and-take" men. There is this difference: The trouble is that a large proportion are "take" only, not "give." They simply go on this line alone—"how cheap" they can get their labour, for the sake of cutting their neighbour's throat in the matter of competition. So long as you have to deal with men of this kind you must have a defined line. I regard "give-and-take" as one of the finest theories that can be adopted, but the most impracticable in its application. We never know precisely when to "give" and when to "take," and there are a large number of cases in which we have to give all and have nothing to take. If the world were governed by principle (said one of England's greatest men) nothing would be easier than to govern the world. But, seeing that such is not the case, it becomes the duty of every wise man to accept the least of any two evils presenting themselves. The lesser of the two evils which are now before us is that of unionism as against freedom of contract. To withstand unprincipled employers, who would take all and give nothing, it is necessary to have a strong unionism—to have a defined line, in the interest both of employers and workers. Now, for union men to mingle, to mix themselves and their labour with that of indifferent workmen, and secured at a cheap rate by the unscrupulous employers, what does that mean? It means simply to kill the union. It will kill the unions, for this reason: If you once introduce distrust into the ranks of labour there will be an end of the union. The employers know that if they can create distrust among any body of men these men are at their mercy. If the union is strong, having the welfare of the worker at heart, desirous to protect him from bad outside influence, they do a good for employers as well as men, by getting for the employers better service. We ask for ourselves the same right which we concede to the capitalist—the right to combine. Take, for instance, Chambers of Commerce. What are they but gigantic unions in the interest of trade and commerce? And properly so. They are combinations for the fixed purpose of guarding trade and putting an end to unprincipled trading. All honour to the Chambers of Commerce for doing that. But will you allow the Chambers of Commerce to do one thing and not allow the unions to do what is also in the interest of trade for no other reason than because it benefits the members of the union? If you apply the same arguments to Chambers of Commerce the effect of carrying it out would be suicidal to them as a Chamber of Commerce as well as to us as a union. What would happen if the union did not guard the interest of the worker? Let us see. We all know the conversations that go on from time to time in the ship's hold, or on the wharf. Some over-zealous unionist might make some remark that displeased some one present. No notice perhaps might be taken of it at the time; but he soon receives intimation that he has to go. This weeding-out principle goes along, until you find none but weak-kneed unionists are left. No doubt there are weak-kneed employers as well. There are employers who would leave the Employers' Association to-morrow if they dared. In the way I have described the men are operated on until they are completely in the power of their masters for the time. It comes to this at last, in respect of freedom of contract with regard to labour: that in the outside market the whole trade as regards the wages of the workmen has got down to starvation-point. But, it will be asked, what is the way out of it? I would suggest the same that was suggested to the employers in Canterbury—for there are some reasonable employers there as elsewhere. It was suggested when a dispute arose that there should be a strong body on each side. Let us have a strong body of federated labour and a strong federation of capital—two strong bodies. In this way the interests involved on each side would be very great. Each would be strong enough to discuss all points without insisting upon the cession of any right before the discussion could begin. In this way there would be some prospect of arriving at an amicable understanding. This is a position which I trust Mr. McLean would impress upon the employers of this colony. We have no wish to see them cut up into sections. Let us have a strong federation of employers if you please, but let them accord to us the same right. To ask us to act as individuals while they act in concert as an organized body would be unfair and unjust. When a dispute arises let us come to a Conference, sit round a table as we are here, and try to arrive at some just decision that will determine all differences.

The Chairman: Is there any other member who wishes to address the Conference before I call on the Hon. Mr. McLean to reply?

Hon. Mr. McLean: Are you all exhausted, gentlemen? Have you expended all your powers of argument against the Union Company?—(Laughter).—Well, I must say that, with the exception of one or two speeches, I have nothing to complain of: the discussion has been carried on in a fair spirit. A good deal has been twisted about, but I suppose that is all fair in argument. I certainly must compliment you all upon the way in which this discussion has been carried on. I got a few hard knocks for the company I represent, and if I give a few small knocks in return I hope you will not think I am doing it purposely or through ill-will, but only in the way of defence. I am not here to quarrel with anybody, as I said, and I shall try to express my ideas, in answer to the things that have been said against us, as mildly as possible. Now, gentlemen, a good deal has been said about the employers not appearing here. No doubt, as our company is a large employer of labour, I might as well say something in defence of it before this assembly. The employers' associations, as you are aware, were only brought into existence since this strike. So far as I know, there was not an employers' association in existence before this strike took place. But by this strike their men were called on to leave them, they did not know for what. When their men formerly came and asked whether there was any objection to their joining the unions, most of them said they had no objection. Our men came to us and asked the same question, and we had no objection. This boycott, which was brought into existence by the Maritime Council, caused all the mischief. Those employers who had no objection to their men joining their trade unions, who were perfectly willing that their men should do so, were the first to be attacked. When asked, their storemen refused to deliver their goods; their carters refused to carry them. What was the consequence? Their employes had either to obey orders, and retire from the unions, or leave their employment. What other position could be taken up by the employers? Their position was

forced on them by the unions; and, gentlemen, it is useless to put the blame on anything else. Now, let me put the matter in this way: We are all ready to support a certain degree of unionism; we all supported the Dockers' Union at Home. We all, capitalists more than labourers, gave money to help that Union. It was so successful in carrying out its object that a wave of unionism came along and excited such a state of feeling that the unions in these colonies banded together to try conclusions—with what? They did not know themselves. Is not that, I appeal to you, a true statement of the case? Did the employers ever lift a finger against the unions before they were attacked themselves? Take the Shipowners' Association, which has been hit at by the speakers on behalf of the unions. Did it ever lift a finger before it was attacked? The shipowners in Australia were running in each other's trades, cutting each other's throats in competition, but when this trouble arose they came together like a clap of thunder. And for what?—Self-preservation. They must either have submitted to be ruined, or defend themselves. That was the position. They were not fighting the unions. The officers had made a demand on them, and, mind you, there was no need for any quarrel to come out of it. This demand, made by impulsive officers, brought on the whole thing. And that is what you have to fear in all unions—impulsive leaders. Had they allowed the men and owners to come together a basis of some amicable settlement might have been arrived at. But these impulsive leaders came between them, and there was no longer any way of coming to an understanding. I will say this for the Union Company and the men in their employment, that whenever they have met face to face they have always found the means of settling differences amicably until this time. Our board of directors have always acted in unison, as one man, in listening to reason and remedying grievances whenever they found any to exist. We always did our best to maintain peace and settle all differences in a friendly spirit. Now, Mr. Sandford has made a good speech, a very fair and proper speech. It was a speech framed upon the ground of ameliorating the condition of the men and trying to keep labour at a fair price. But unionism, riding on its high horse, as it came along went far in excess of that. With the greater part of Mr. Sandford's speech I have no fault to find; but if the unions were reasonable many industries might be kept going and good employment given to labour, thus preventing goods from other countries where labour is more plentiful coming in to compete with them. With regard to the employers not coming here, I do not say that there is much to blame them for. They had no quarrel with you, and they have, most of them, taken back any men they had room for. I am not acquainted with any employer who has refused to take back any man who left his service, if there was a place vacant. Of course, as has been very well put, there is a certain class of employers who have no great sympathy with their men. But they are not all alike; there are, no doubt, a few bad employers as well as bad unionists; but that is no reason why you should attack all the good ones. Now, gentlemen, to come to the question of whose fault it was that this strike came to New Zealand. I have complimented the officers of the unions here on trying to prevent its coming to New Zealand. But in almost every speech that has been brought against me it is implied that I confessed it was we who brought it here. Now, gentlemen, I made no such confession, and I put it to the delegates who have been in Sydney to say if the state of things was not such there that it was utterly impossible things could go on as they were much longer. How could we afford to pay 2s. 3d. a ton for the discharge of our steamers? The men would work as they liked, and refused to obey their officers, who lost control of them. In fact, the position had become such that it was necessary to do something to meet it. The men had come to an agreement with the owners to work for a certain period,—a year, I think,—but declined to discharge two of our ships because one of themselves was put to oversee the work done. And that man was a union man, not one of the others. They said it was "sweating." Then the Seamen's Union brought along what they called a "slate," or a revision of the rules, and made a further demand. Thus was demand after demand made, until the shipowners said they could not stand anything more. I said to the officers of the union here that that was a state of things which was bound to be put a stop to. I do not think they wanted to press it here, but the representatives of the Seamen's Union who went to Sydney argued very strongly for it at the Conference. That is all we know. Even then, to try and give way on certain things, I myself telegraphed to our manager in Sydney to ask the shipowners there to give way to a certain extent. They then offered to compromise and give way so much, but the Seamen's Union would not agree to withdraw from their position. They withdrew from the Conference, and told the owners they would take steps to bring the increase into force. It is easy to bring forward the eight hours' labour movement as a hobby to ride on. But what does this eight-hours movement for the Seamen's Union mean? It meant this: that the seaman was to do no work in the daytime when in port without pay. You may put it how you like, but that is what the revision of the rules really meant. It is useless to say it was not. What was meant was that a man should keep his watch of four hours at night and four hours in the morning, but should do no work in the daytime. Was it judicious, at a time like that, when trade was bad, when shipowners were losing money like water pouring out of a bucket, to set up such demands? Was that a time to take advantage of the employers and to bring about a crisis? I say this solemnly—that it was the labour party, determining to try their strength, who brought on this crisis. The Shipowners' Association up to that time had not raised a finger to attack them in any way. The whole thing came upon them like a clap of thunder. They were bound to take measures for their protection, and they came together in their own defence. The Conference at Albury was held some time after the men were out. That was a conference of employers. No doubt they agreed then and there to stand by each other, in the same way as the employers in New Zealand were forced to stand by each other. But the employers then had no union of their own here. It was suddenly forced on them by the strike. The cargo from our steamers in Sydney could not be discharged. The lumpers refused to discharge it. Then the crews refused to obey their officers, and the union men were taken out of the ship. It is useless for Mr. Millar to say that the crews could have taken the cargo out and put it in the stores. It was not possible under the excitement, and they might have been pulled to pieces before they got it into the

stores. I now come to the question which has been brought up as to the affiliation of the officers to the Maritime Council. There is no doubt that at one time Captain Highman was opposed to an affiliation, but he found it advisable to change his ideas. The Union Company, in order to get peace, would have done everything possible to avoid any difficulty. We have given way even when we could not afford it. No doubt there was reason for it in this way: if you had the Officers' Association in the Maritime Council, they would have representatives there; if you had the Seamen's Union there, they would have representatives; if you had the coal-miners there, they would have representatives. With all these representatives, no doubt, if it was a question of increase for one union, they would very likely not agree to it unless all got it alike, so if they agreed to a rise all round the expenditure would be increased to such an extent that the ships would not pay and the owners would have to stop them, unless they could increase their revenue. But if people do not wish to travel you cannot make them travel, and so there must be a limit to your expenditure. With regard to the affiliation of the officers with the Maritime Council, I did not at first look on it in the same light as the Shipowners' Association did, but agreed to submit the matter for their consideration and discussion. When the Maritime Council came to me about the officers' difficulty, I told them I had no power to submit the matter to them without the consent of the Shipowners' Association, but that I was willing to show them what the Shipowners' Association and ourselves were proposing to pay the officers. With that proposal they appeared well satisfied, and it was then that I wrote the letter that has been referred to by Captain Highman. The Maritime Council said they were satisfied with our proposals, but they also said they were not satisfied with the demands which were made by the Officers' Association, and had previously admitted that the demands were excessive. It had been endeavoured to put the company in a corner, but in a corner we would not be put. I am not going to stand here and let any one take vengeance upon us because we hold out for our own, or upon those who stood by us at a critical moment. Let us discuss everything fairly and openly. Let us try to lead each other to do the proper thing; and what we know to be an improper thing, let it stand down.—(Hear, hear.)—I now come to the question of union and non-union men. Let me first take our own case. A man came down from Melbourne—I forget his name—to organize the Seamen's Union as a separate union here. It was some time after that it was affiliated to the Australian Union. The firemen and seamen were in the union. The cooks and stewards had not a union then, neither had the officers. They were not contaminated by working with non-unionists then; why should they be now? The statement has been ridiculed that we were every day getting the flower of the young men of New Zealand into the service of the Union Company. I repeat it that within the last fortnight or three weeks we have been getting the very flower of the young men of New Zealand into our service—I do not care who contradicts it—that we are putting into our boats men who are tried and found to be very fit for the employment. One class of men we cannot get as many of as we wish, but they are coming. We have plenty of officers; we have plenty of cooks and stewards. Now, I ask Mr. Millar, I challenge him, to take the embargo off the seamen and firemen, and you will see that within a fortnight the whole of them will be coming back too. Many of the men thrown out of employment by the strike have gone into the country, or other parts of the colony, in search of work; but take the embargo off them and you will find them coming back in numbers to our service. I say, once more, that we never lifted a finger to harm them or their union. Even when we were attacked, we would only seek for the service of other men after the seamen were called out of the ships. This was done, not to injure the seamen, but to defend ourselves. It is also nonsense to say that we have done anything to attack the seamen's or any other union. I must now come to Mr. Millar. You all see that we need have no great hope to expect mercy from him. He has been very busy to get afloat a National Commercial and Industrial Co-operative Steamship Company. He is anxious to get it done on the co-operative principle. I, for one, am glad to see people co-operating for such a good work. I do not blame them in the least. Some time ago, during the dispute with the Northern Steamship Company, he tried to run a steamer upon the same principle. Did he show the balance-sheet of this company, so as to enable people to see what it cost to run against the Northern Steamship Company? How much did he lose by the "Bellinger"? Gentlemen, he has been unfortunate with his steamers, for, although the "Bellinger" was run with all the experience and intelligence of the Seamen's Union, they ran her on the rocks. Those whom we employ have never put our steamers on the rocks.

Mr. J. A. Millar: The "Taiaroa." Do not say that your steamers were not on the rocks.

Hon. Mr. McLean: The "Taiaroa" had union men in her.

Mr. J. A. Millar: The "Rotomahana." The "Maitai."

Hon. Mr. McLean: They were manned with union men, not with free labour. I am referring to the period during which we have had to employ non-union men.

Mr. J. A. Millar: The "Te Anau" was very near the rocks, if not quite on them; hold an inquiry and you will see that was the case.

Hon. Mr. McLean: The "Te Anau" was not near the rocks.

Mr. J. A. Millar: We have letters from passengers. We can prove it by passengers' sworn testimony.

Hon. Mr. McLean: My good fellow, we are quite up to all the statements used against us, and circulated under such circumstances. I say, if you had letters from twenty passengers, she was not near the place where she was said to have been, and I make that statement positively. I do not mind people writing to the newspapers. The Union Company has never cared to contradict any of them. But we were told that we should in a fortnight be in a corner for want of coal. Now, if the National Commercial and Industrial Co-operative Steamship Company's promoters are wise men, and there is likely to be a scarcity of coal, they will prepare for their steamers. Let them, then, come to the Union Company and they will sell them a thousand tons of coal if they require it. We have coaled the "Doric;" we have coaled the "Tongariro;" we are coaling the

"Arawa." We should not give away all this coal if through doing so we were going to stick ourselves up. At a meeting in Dunedin they were all burning to start this National Commercial and Industrial Co-operative Steamship Company. Mr. Fox, the agent for the "Jubilee," was there burning to assist the cause. Well, gentlemen, I would ask you just to consider what has been the result of the opposition that recently came here. Why, while we were continuing during the strike to take grain at low rates, the owners of the opposition steamer put up the charges to 6s. 6d. a bag! That is the difference between the dealings of the Union Company and the opposition. Well, now, Mr. Millar was going to kill us with this boat; but after getting some coals in Sydney she could not get any more, and so had to sell what she had, return her passage-money, and lay up there. I am not afraid of this opposition. It is not very long since, I venture to say, that it was the opinion of Mr. Millar and of every seaman that no other than the Union Company should have the trade of New Zealand; and I am sure it will come back to that again; it is only a matter of time. After settling our difficulties, I have no doubt we shall grow fond of each other, and be a happy family again.—(Laughter.)—But there is another difficulty that comes up in the settlement of this matter. I refer to the action of the Seamen's Union at the time they were running the "Bel-linger" against the Northern Company. We stepped in and did our best to effect a settlement, and a settlement was arrived at on the understanding that all the men then in the employ of the Northern Company would be taken into the unions. But how did the Seamen's Union carry out their part of the bargain? They did not take the men in, and a number of them are not in the Union to this day! I am not blaming Mr. Millar altogether for this, but a breach of faith on their part such as that makes it very difficult to deal with a case like the present. I would ask Mr. Millar now, would he really ask us to discharge a couple of thousand men? Could it be done, or could he find the men to take their places, scattered as they now are over the country? Under such circumstances, and when a breach of faith has taken place before, we must now stick to those we have employed. You could not get the old men together. We can only take those who may come back to us if we have room for them. We are quite willing to do that. But is it not, at the same time, a fair thing for us to say that we must stick to the men who are already in our employment? We will not deny any man who comes to us if we have employment to give. We will accept union men or non-union men. We have never shut any man out whether he was concerned in this strike or not. If a good man who has been on strike comes back to us we will not shut him out. If we have a vacancy for such a man he will still have a better chance of getting it than an outsider. But it is unreasonable to ask us to discharge the men who have come to our aid. It is impossible, and you must not ask us to do an impossibility. Before your unions came into existence did not the Union Company treat their men well? Was there ever a grievance brought before the directors, or the managing director, which, if there was anything in it, they did not investigate? Had the party aggrieved to wait any time before it was settled? I ask that without fear as to what the answer will be. Mr. Millar said something about barricading the wharves. What have we to do with barricading the wharves? That is the business of the Harbour Boards. The Union Company has no business with it. If there is any complaint to be made on that score, the Harbour Board are the proper persons to complain to. Then, Mr. Millar made an allusion to demurrage. I would ask him whether we have ever asked or received from him money for demurrage. Mr. Millar knows very well that sometimes a fireman would leave us in the lurch in a port. When that happens we must take a man wherever we can get him, whether he may be a union or a non-union man. No man could object to that. It is all very well to say that experienced men will not go with inexperienced firemen, but they have done so in the past. An attack has been made on the engineers. What I say of the engineers is this: that from the beginning of this strike they told us they had no grievance against us, that they wanted nothing, and were quite contented. It is useless to refer to the Conference at Sydney. The engineers told us that it did not affect us at all. There was a difficulty indeed between the engineers and the firemen. The former had lost control of the engine-room, and it was quite impossible to go on longer without some trouble arising. It is all very well to say that the engineers are an overbearing lot; they are like other men. Some may be overbearing, but generally they are a very good class of men, and they are always willing to get things put to rights. It is said that the engineers went as firemen and stokers. They did nothing of the sort. I sent an extra man on board one of the Sydney steamers; but what did the engineer do? He sent the man on shore, stating that he had no trouble with the firemen, and that after the first hour they did their work well. All that I can say about the engineers is that they behaved well to us. They came to us in a very liberal manner, and said they had no grievance, that they wanted nothing, and that the attack upon us was not fair. I have thought it right, now that an attack had been made on them, to say what I knew myself. I now come to Mr. Seymour. Probably I ought not to take much notice of what he said. I do not think that his speech was as fair or as mild as one might have expected from a man in his position. He turned into ridicule the statement which I made that our company was conducted like a Government institution, by making it appear that I said "more like a governing body." What I meant was that it was not run altogether for the greed of shareholders. That is what I wanted to show you. Some people run away with the idea that we buy all these boats with our own money out of the profits. We do nothing of the sort. We raise capital as it is needed for the purpose. No doubt we keep ourselves strong. We are quite strong enough to bear a shake like this; and I venture to say we shall stand the shake of an opposition. We are not grabbing everything. We have kept ahead of trade. We have brought plant here to meet the requirements of trade as it increased. We have plant coming that will do everything that has to be done in the way of carrying from New Zealand for some time to come. You will never hear complaints of our having raised the rates of freight if you go from one end of New Zealand to the other. It is impossible to please everybody, but I think you will find that, for people who had a monopoly, there was never a monopoly in existence that was so popular as this monopoly. Why is it so? Simply because we treated every one well. As to the Seamen's Representation Bill, it is not correct to say that I

used my influence against that Bill. The clause that a fireman must have a colonial discharge was struck out, as no doubt it was put in in view of these troubles. It was struck out very properly. As a matter of fact, the Bill did get through the Upper House. Though I know I get the credit of it, there are not many who use less influence politically than I do. Any advice I can give I willingly give. I have refused office often; I do not want office. I am mixing as little with politics as I can. You must not think that I am exercising any more influence in the Upper House, for there they can think for themselves. I will now come to the next important point in this discussion, which has been raised by Mr. Ansell, from Greymouth. I do not much object to Mr. Ansell putting it from his point of view about the reduction in the quantity of coal, but now I will tell my story. He has talked about the Wallisend Mine being shut up. I put it to Mr. Ansell himself, or to Mr. Lomas, or any of them, would they not say that mine was a "white elephant," which should be shut up? "Faults" were all round it. Six thousand pounds was required to "prove" these "faults." Since we became interested £3,000 has been spent there. Mr. Ansell knows that steps were taken to get the water out of the Coal-pit Heath. If we could get a market for the coal every miner at Greymouth would get full employment. Regarding the falling-off in the output, Mr. Ansell should have told you there was, owing to the Newcastle strike, a great pressure used to get as much coal as possible. We were doing a roaring trade, and got out as much as we could; we stuffed the railways. Would he, or any one, say that could continue? You are aware that coal-pits are being opened all over New Zealand. Every lignite-pit as well as coal-pit is being opened. We used to have the contract for carrying coal all along the coast. What is the position now? The Nightcaps Company take the contract for the railway until it meets the Kaitangata Company; the Kaitangata Company takes it up to Shag Point; the Shag Point Company then takes it a bit further. What is got from Greymouth is taken some to Oamaru, some to Timaru and Lyttelton, and some here. It is a very good coal for railway purposes and for gas, but people do not take kindly to it for household use, though half Westport and half Greymouth makes a capital household coal. It was said that we owned the Koranui. It is true we amalgamated with Captain Williams. He had the pit. He said to us, "You shall not have the steamers unless you take the pit." We had no desire for the pit, but we could not help ourselves. We sold that, and so got out of the coal trade. We bought the Westport Company's steamers, and so got the carrying contract. All the contract now existing between ourselves and the Westport Company is a year-to-year contract, and we are only bound by ties of fair-dealing towards each other. We are quite willing to rely on each other. They cannot give us coal now, and we do not demand it. Our contract is from year to year, and our relations are likely to continue in the same satisfactory condition. I think the representatives of the miners here will give us credit, as Mr. Lomas gave us credit yesterday, for raising the coal-output of New Zealand. It is to our interest to see an industry such as that revived. We wish to see all the industries in New Zealand flourishing. It is a most unfortunate thing that any steps should ever have been taken to stop the important industries of New Zealand. That must, even from a labourer's point of view, bring a great infliction on your co-workers. I will now refer to the alleged agreement with the Grey Valley Company. I never heard of that agreement, and would have been no party to any such agreement. We would not for a single moment have allowed any one to say that we should not have our own coal. The thing is absurd. I did advise Mr. Ansell to get out all the coal he could. So far as the Union Company is concerned, we refused to go outside and get foreign coal, and we are at this present moment working with coal from Newcastle and New Zealand. But there is a large quantity of coal coming here, which will interfere with the coal industry of this colony. But that is not done by us. That is a matter the miners ought to consider. Having now heard all about this dispute, I ask you to say whether the Union Company had anything to do with originating it. I emphatically say that we did not bring it on. We did everything we possibly could to avoid it. It was forced on us through the men being taken out of our ships. You can search for yourselves and see whether it is true that we ever inserted any advertisement in a newspaper here, as has been stated, until after our men were withdrawn. The papers are there; they will speak for themselves.

Mr. Boase: Are you prepared to say, Mr. McLean, that there never was an agreement between you and the Grey Valley Company?

Hon. Mr. McLean: I never heard of it. We would not have allowed it. Why, the idea of agreeing to an agreement that you would not give yourself your own coal is ridiculous.—(Laughter.)—I have seen many things in the Greymouth papers which were well worth reading, and which appeared to me purely imaginary, even to Mr. Gibb's letter. Mr. Gibb is a man who made a good impression on me. He is an enthusiast in this cause. I wish there were more people so little impulsive. If Mr. Millar would only take a lesson from him and would be guided by him he would not get so deep as he is likely to get. To come to Captain Highman. Captain Highman has stated the officers were denied the right to assemble. Who denied them the right to assemble? Who denied them the right to associate? They are welcome to have their association. They have, I suppose, made their mind up about it. I now think it is not good for them to be banded together with others, and that they have seen this. The few that are left have got a union, but they have no ships, and what is the good of a union without ships? We are not putting any embargo on their coming back; we are willing to take them back. Captain Highman has made a statement in the papers that these men were worked for thirty-six hours at a stretch. He has discounted this statement considerably since he came here. I should like to know who the men are that could do it. And if they could do it, where is the employer who would let them? I have investigated the matter myself. We are quite prepared to have fault found with our administration, and to profit by it. If we did not hearken to faults we should never improve our administration. I asked the men whether there was anything in this statement. They said they had had long hours at Lyttelton, but they admitted that when they went out of port the captain took the first watch. I asked them whether they could not do something among themselves to prevent these

long hours. One said that when the cargo came dribbling down, as it sometimes did, there must be some one there to receive it. I asked them whether they could not arrange something better. One man said he did not like to leave it to any one else, and he did not see any way out of the difficulty. Officer or no officer, if a man has a grievance we are ready to remedy it, whether he is the least or the highest in our service. I positively say this, moreover: that if I found any man working for a greater number of hours than was good for him I would submit that matter to the directors, and it would not be allowed any longer. Talking of officers, I may tell you we wanted to transfer a non-union crew into another boat in Sydney, but the non-unionists declined to be transferred. They said, "We will not sail with unionist officers. We have had enough of them coming down the coast."—(Laughter.)—You see by that it is not all on one side. I say again to Mr. Millar, take off the embargo which you have laid on the men and you will see how many will be back in less than a fortnight. Now about this telegram. The masters and chief officers said they were going to get up an association that would not be dragged through the mire. I said I had no objection to their having an association so long as they kept by themselves. I am very happy that they should have an association. My friend Mr. Ansell said something about free men in the coal-mines and the danger through gas explosions. Now, if I am correctly informed, men go along the drives every morning before the men go to work. I do not think he need have said that, for there are many non-union miners who are thoroughly practical men. I do not know of any loss of life through this.

Mr. Ansell: Refer to your own pits, Mr. McLean, and see the loss of life that has been occasioned.

Hon. Mr. McLean: I do not know of any pit belonging to us where there has been loss of life. It may be right for you to frighten everybody. I do not complain. I do not think I should trespass on your time any longer. Probably I have wearied you a good deal. From the employers' point of view I have shown you that the Shipowners' Association never moved a step until they were driven into this thing. I have shown you that we did not move a step here. Although it was necessary to work the wharf in Sydney with non-union labour, that was no reason why the men should have been called out of the ships here. Even after they were taken out of the ships we did not do a single thing or say anything to show a disposition to retaliate. We have got along very well with the unions in the past, and we may get on with them very well in the future. And now that you have heard all about this dispute, can any of you tell us what it is all about?

Mr. Sandford: The dispute is this: as to whether labour has the right to federate. There is no doubt that is what it has now come to. Suppose this attack had not been made, this question would still have been raised. The attack was originated by the Shipowners' Association in practically denying to labour the right to federate.

Hon. Mr. McLean: But the officers were affiliated with the Trades Hall, and that is quite a different thing from the Maritime Council here. Do you think it right that all the ships in the country should be stopped because a baker has a row with his men? Under the circumstances of the Trades Hall affiliation that was possible. I think the great difficulty which the Maritime Council had in arriving at a proper knowledge of the position was that they were not brought face to face with the parties concerned, and that they so seldom met together. How often have they all met? Before a dispute of this magnitude had been entered upon you should all have met in consultation with each other, and when you met your first consideration ought to have been as to the means which could be adopted to avoid the severe struggle that has taken place. If the dispute was one occurring only between the Shipowners' Association and the Seamen's Union, what earthly good was it to any one to call all these people out? You talk of labour fighting capital! What is capital in this country but the hard earnings of saving and industrious men put into all kinds of co-operative and limited-liability undertakings? In effect, these men who have gone out on strike are really fighting to kill their own money. What is all the acquired wealth of this colony that we sometimes hear of? Where is it? A good many squatters from my quarter have gone into the Insolvency Court. Farmers also are not in a very brilliant position. How many men are working from dawn to dark for less in the way of wages than half a crown a day! It is true, indeed, they have their own little place, their piece of ground, so that, although they are earning little money, they are independent. It would be far better if people of the towns would go into the country and assist in the settlement of the land. You could grow nearly everything you eat, and, as I have said just now, if your income is small, it would be an independency.

Mr. Johnson: You must alter the land-laws before you can do that.

Hon. Mr. McLean: If you come down our way I assure you you can get as much land as you want. I am sorry to say that this matter has frightened timid people too much. The thing will right itself. We should not be frightened. We will do what we can to provide employment, but you must not ask us to do impossibilities. Let the unionists and non-unionists work with each other. They should consider the words of Mr. Champion. Who would object to unionism as he puts it?

Captain Highman: He knows nothing about it.

The Chairman: He is a renegade.

Hon. Mr. McLean: I do not know whether he is a renegade or not, but there is nothing in his principles that any fair man can object to. However, it is not for me to bandy words. We are all looking for a way out of this difficulty. I am quite ready to discuss the whole matter with any one. But I say again you must not ask us to do impossibilities. No one regrets more than I do to see heart-broken men hunting about for employment. But all industries are stopped; that is the reason so many men are seeking for work. Why was it that you interfered with them? There would have been less suffering: the dispute would have been fought out quite as well without doing all this mischief. I am sure that in all your hearts you must think of the wives and children, the whole families, that are suffering through this unfortunate strike. Not one of you but must think in your heart, if you have any feeling there at all, for the suffering of your fellow-people. I know I do.

I am much obliged to you for the hearing you have given me. I hope I have not said anything to tread on your toes. If I have said anything it is in self-defence; and I will not leave this room having a grudge against any man that is in it.—(Applause.)—My friend Mr. Hoban, who is fond of misrepresenting things, says we preferred to employ union men. We have had to employ union men, and for this reason: if we put in a non-union man all the other men would have been taken out of our ships. It was Hobson's choice with us. Talking of the two thousand men that are now at work, it is simply an exchange, as there are a good many sailors, I hear, up the Wairarapa looking for employment. But coming back to the main question, what is the use of staying here if we cannot agree? I am not the dictator of New Zealand, like Mr. Millar. Mr. Millar says he will not agree to this; he will leave New Zealand before he will do it. Very well, that is his own opinion. I do not make any statement of that nature. I always discuss matters with my directors and carry out their wishes. I have now to repeat that we will stick to the two thousand men we have in our employment. We do not want to compel them to go into the unions. You say there is no compulsion. It is compulsion to be obliged to do anything you do not want to do, and we do not want to exercise any compulsion, as many of the men may positively object to join a union. As to working with non-union men, I think you will find that you will have to work with non-union men. If the unions are such good things they will draw men to them without compulsion. But the fault of all unions has been that they have compelled men to join them through fear. That has been their weakness. Every man who joins a union of his own freewill will be a source of strength to his union, but if he is compelled to join he can only be a source of weakness. As for sailors becoming agriculturists, the idea is not at all so ridiculous as it appears to some. Sailors are good men for farmers if they once go into the country. They are all handy men: they can turn their hand to any kind of labour: they can do almost anything that turns up on a farm. It may be said there are married men among them, but I am quite satisfied even these will be quite able to make their way in the country. What I want you to do is to keep to the point. Seeing that I have come here to meet you in good faith, I do not want to stay here and be attacked in the way I am being attacked now. I have a good deal of important business to do. If I leave the room I do not want you to think that I do so from any discourtesy to you. But of all things I do not want to make a quarrel: we came here good friends; I do not wish that we should part bad friends.

Mr. Winter: The few remarks I wish to make just now are simply in regard to questions raised by the Hon. Mr. McLean. First of all there was a distinction drawn between the old and new unionism, and I think it should be clearly understood what the old and new unionism means. When the old unionism is referred to it is generally with the idea of annoyance. The old unions are those which have stood on their own ground without affiliating with other unions, and they have from time to time been found to be easily dealt with. When those unions affiliated one with the other, and one colony with the other, it was found they had received additional strength. That is the difference between the old and the new unionism. The employers do not object to the old unionism so much—they rather foster it—but they do object to the new unionism, because it is too powerful. Mr. McLean asked how it was that the other unions outside the maritime bodies had been brought into this dispute; and it was pointed out here by Mr. Sandford this morning that they were simply drawn into it because, as unionists, they had to fight for a principle; and had it not been for the manifesto that unionism must not affiliate, but must be crushed out, I do not believe so many unions outside the maritime bodies would have been drawn into it. But when it was understood that the employers had made up their minds to crush this principle of the affiliation of unions, it then behoved all unionists to take their places in the ranks and fight for their principle. The Railway Servants' Society, as one union affiliated with the Maritime Council, was drawn into it simply because on the one hand it was affiliated, while on the other hand it was pushed and driven into it by the action of the Railway Commissioners. That is all the explanation I wish to make here now, Mr. Chairman. If I were to occupy the time of the Conference any longer, perhaps it would cause unnecessary delay. But it might be asked, "How did the Commissioners force the Railway Servants' Society into the strike?" and in reply to that I may say that if the Commissioners had not forced their men to go and take the places of other men who were out on strike, and with whom they were affiliated, thereby making, not free labourers of themselves, but thorough blacklegs—had the Commissioners avoided doing that, and listened to our pleadings as an executive when we begged them not to do so, in all probability the railway servants would not have been included. But when they insisted on sending all their men whom they could spare down to Lyttelton to take the places of wharf-labourers who had come out, and with whom their men were affiliated, there was no other course open for the railway servants' executive than to call those men out. That is our explanation.

Mr. Millar: As Mr. McLean brought in one or two matters partly foreign to this dispute, I would take the opportunity of referring to them and to one or two other matters he has brought forward. In the first place, I think Mr. McLean carefully avoided the real point at issue. He passed over with a very few remarks the question of the officers, and pointed out that the action of the wharf-labourers in Sydney was really the cause—or led the people to believe they were the primary cause—of the present struggle. I wish to say, whilst not upholding the wharf-labourers altogether in their action in Sydney, the dispute with the wharf-labourers was settled some time before this trouble took place. That an agreement had been signed for twelve months we admit, and also that the men broke that on the New Zealand wharves. But the reason of their breaking that agreement was that the other matter was introduced, in the shape of a contractor on the wharves to which they objected. I think Mr. McLean will admit that had it not been that the Seamen's Union was in conference in Sydney, and decided to deal with the matter, the question whether the dispute would have been settled in the quiet manner it was is an open question. The association themselves at that time, had the seamen's delegates agreed not to support the wharf-labourers, might willingly have conceded the demands made by the Seamen's Union. But, because

they declined to do that, they tried to settle the matter themselves, and did so, and were treated by the shipowners with disdain after they returned. To say that the wharf-labourers' dispute had anything to do with this is I think altogether wrong. The whole thing was settled, and the wharf-labourers were working amicably at the time, although I admit they kicked their traces; but they were brought to their bearings, partly through their officers and partly through the Conference, and induced to go back to work. They can disabuse their minds of the idea that the wharf-labourers had anything to do with it here. I say the wharf-labourers had nothing to do with this dispute at the commencement. I believe the Union Steamship Company did pay 2s. 2d. per ton for discharging, and they paid 2s. 3d. in one instance; but Mr. McLean should have told you that they also paid as low as 10½d. The minimum and maximum rates paid should have been given.

Hon. Mr. McLean: I know of no case where they have been paid 10d. for many a day unless it was a few tons. If you take the whole lot it is not 10d.

Mr. Millar: You quoted the maximum sum you paid in the "Monowai;" I am quoting the minimum sum, 10½d., paid in the case of the "Wakatipu."

Hon. Mr. McLean: A few bags.

Mr. Millar: If you strike the average between the two you could put it down at a cost of 1s. 6d. per ton.

Hon. Mr. McLean: It is more than that, a good deal.

Mr. Millar: Well, that is just my own idea. Then, Mr. McLean says that the Seamen's Union submitted "slate" proposals, giving you to understand, as I take it, that they had submitted "slate" proposals before this dispute took place. But, gentlemen, they did nothing of the sort: the "slate" proposals have been submitted since the dispute took place—a fortnight afterwards—and the men submitted them saying that the whole of the bodies who had any demand to make would make it now, so that there should be no future disputes; and, whatever settlement was arrived at on those "slate" proposals, an agreement should be signed for three or five years, so that there should be confidence in the future with both workers and employers, and that there should be no deviation from those proposals. Those were the proposals submitted by the Maritime Council of New South Wales, representing the demands of the five maritime bodies, who were all desirous, as the shipowners professed to be, of having a settlement. Mind you, they did not say to the shipowners, "These are our proposals: we will have them or nothing;" but they said, "These are our proposals: we submit them to you, and we want a conference upon them, and we will discuss them upon their merits. If we cannot make a case of it we will withdraw from it. But we want you and the public to listen to our argument in support of those proposals." But the shipowners would not agree to it. Why? We can only believe that they were afraid to come and appear before the public. We are not afraid to do it; and if uneducated men such as we are supposed to be are not afraid, and all the brain-power of Australia is afraid, to come forward and debate upon it, then they have a poor case.

Hon. Mr. McLean: I give an emphatic denial to that.

Mr. Millar: I say that since these "slate" proposals were submitted there has been no conference; they have refused a conference upon those proposals submitted to them.

Hon. Mr. McLean: Would Mr. Millar stand up here and say that Messrs. Gibb and Belcher did not represent the Seamen's Union at the Conference, or that after the Conference was over they said the Seamen's Union insisted on their demands?

Mr. Millar: Mr. McLean is labouring under a delusion. He is confusing the seamen's demands with the "slate" proposals, which, as I am pointing out, are the proposals of five amalgamated bodies since the dispute. The demands of the Seamen's Union were put forward before this dispute, and the seamen met the shipowners in conference, and after discussing everything they had come to a mutual agreement on all points except the hours of labour. The men wanted eight hours, but this the shipowners declined to accede to, saying the demand meant ruination, and they asked our delegates to reconsider the question. This they did, and submitted a fresh rule for twelve hours. Then the shipowners asked for two days to consider the question, and they agreed to meet on the Saturday and have a definite reply. Our delegates went to receive the reply to the amended rule for twelve hours instead of eight; but, instead of getting this, they were handed their copy of the rules previously submitted, with six of the rules scratched out which the shipowners had previously agreed to, and told that they declined to discuss the matter further. If that is not a distinct dismissal, I have yet to learn what it is. Had the shipowners said, "We cannot agree to give you twelve hours a day," the seamen were prepared to go further into it, and in all probability waive the point altogether. The shipowners, however, declined to meet us, and we had no opportunity of discussing the matter further; and we then, as Mr. McLean says, put the matter before our members for the purpose of taking a ballot as to whether they would be prepared to insist on those demands. They were asked whether they wanted those things or not, and if they did not want them they had to say No, and then no strike would take place; but if a substantial majority insisted upon them we were to hold them to their word. To say that because we were taking a ballot there was to be a strike is begging the question, as there was as much chance of a majority against it as in favour of it. Mr. McLean says the shipowners took no active steps in the matter, and we admit that; but they remained passive, having stated from the first that they intended to remain passive and throw the onus of taking any action on the men. Remaining passive means that, if you make a demand and a man says he will not grant it, you cannot put your hand in his pocket and take the money out. There are two courses open to an employé—either he must submit to the dictation of his employer or leave his employment. There was no medium course, because they declined to discuss it in any shape or form, and the only option left to the officers was to come out or stay where they were. The statement that they have always been fairly dealt with can be refuted in a few moments. I would point out that five years ago a Marine Officers' Association was formed in Victoria and in New Zealand. The Victorian one went ahead, and they agreed to pay a rate of wages to those officers which was agreed upon. Everything went

along swimmingly for a couple of months, until by-and-by the shipowners called one officer after another into their offices and said, "We cannot afford to pay these wages, and you must give us a rebate of £2 per month upon the rate you have signed for"—that is, that, though they signed on the articles for £15 a month, they only received £13, while giving a receipt for £15. This is what the shipowners did in the whole of the officers in Victoria five years ago.

Hon. Mr. McLean took exception to this statement.

Mr. Millar: I am prepared to prove that such is the case. I am prepared to submit documentary evidence that they did so. They called the officers into their offices and told them that if they did not take £2 per month less they must go; and that is what broke the association up. And when the Marine Association here, of which I am a member, was formed, did not the Union Steamship Company, Mr. McLean, issue a circular to their officers demanding to know whether they belonged to the association? and is that circular not now in print, and in the possession of your masters? Only two months ago one of your masters told me that he would not join the new association before that circular was withdrawn. I interviewed Mr. J. Mills on the matter, and he said he was not aware that the circular was in force.

Hon. Mr. McLean: There was no objection to their joining the association without affiliating.

Mr. Millar: I am talking now about the association which had attained considerable strength before the Union Company knew anything about it.

Hon. Mr. McLean: No.

Mr. Millar: I understand it did, sir. Anyhow, I am just trying to point out what the men can expect if they throw themselves on the mercy of their employers. I was a member of the old association, and still have my book. That association did not come to a head from the fact of the Union Steamship Company's officers being afraid or intimidated too much to join it. Then, you said in your statement, sir, that the management of the boats had been taken completely out of your hands, and at the same time you tell us or lead us to believe that the management was taken out of your hands through the continued aggressiveness of the union. Having, sir, admitted that the aggressiveness of the union has taken the management out of your hands, I can show you, I think, you have cut the ground from underneath your feet in saying that the demands of the union have been exorbitant, because I think it is fully recognised on all sides that the Union Company is one of the best-managed companies in the world. It has increased its dividends from 6 to 8 per cent., with a bonus in good years; and that has been done under the management of the unions. And, having admitted that, I do not think there is any fault to find with them. I do not know of any company that can do better. We have provided one of the finest fleets in the world, one of the finest bodies of men, and returned 8 per cent for the shareholders—not a bad record for the unions. Now, sir, in regard to the Union Company always being good to the men before the association was formed, I never was in that company's employment, but, from what the men have told me, it used to be a common thing in Dunedin for them to arrive on a Saturday night in Port Chalmers, land their wool, go up to Dunedin, load, go to the Molyneux, discharge the cargo on the banks of the river on the Sunday, and go to Dunedin in the morning.

Hon. Mr. McLean: The Union Company did not trade to the Molyneux that I know of.

Mr. Millar: I am taking what was the nucleus of the present Union Steamship Company—namely, the old Harbour Board. They were the nucleus of the Union Steamship Company, and that was their practice at that time. We have the undeniable fact that the Union Steamship Company had a strike because they refused to give the men £7 per month and eight hours. That is on record—that at the formation of the Seamen's Union there was a strike, and the company attempted to fight the seamen, but ultimately granted what they requested. Since that time, I think, they have had very few troubles with the Union Steamship Company. I have no personal feeling against that company, not the slightest. I have worked in complete harmony with them since I have held office, and am prepared to work in complete harmony with them to-morrow, or as soon as this dispute is settled. I admit that they have treated the men fairly, and that they have been paid fairly well. I have never denied the fact; but, at the same time, they would have to go a long way before they got a body of men who would do their work so satisfactorily as these men have who are now concerned in this dispute. Consequently, as far as this is concerned, they are even; there is no obligation on either side, and neither side is indebted to the other. Then, Mr. McLean brought in the question of the settlement of the Northern Company's affair, and told you that we had committed a distinct breach of faith. I deny that *in toto*. Had I thought this matter would have cropped up here I should have produced the written agreement signed by Mr. J. Mills, Captain Birne, and myself in the presence of Mr. Twopeny, editor of the *Otago Daily Times*. The whole stumblingblock had been the retention of the men by the company. If we had desired to admit these men into the union the thing would have been settled months before it was. We declined, however, *in toto* to admit the men into the union; but we agreed that we would make those men who had been in the service of the Northern Company eligible for the Seamen's Union, and we guaranteed that the executive and the head offices of the various branches would use their influence to get those men into the union; and this, I maintain, we honestly carried out. We told them distinctly that five men of our union who had seceded from the ranks would never be admitted to the union again, and Mr. Mills said he could not expect anything else, as men who could sell their fellow-men were not worthy of it.

Hon. Mr. McLean: Did ever he say that? I think it very improbable.

Mr. Millar: Yes. He said he was not going to fight for them at all; but he said the other men were entitled to go into the society, and I pledged my word to him that we would use our influence to get them in. The mode of election in the Seamen's Union is by ballot. Every man receives two balls, a black and a white one, when a candidate is brought up, and he can vote for or against, and no one knows how he votes. Some have got in and some have not. The men we objected to were the men who stole the jewellery, and we refused to have those men in the society. As to whether we have ever tried to run in opposition to the Union Steamship Company

or injure them in any way, I have simply to refer to a couple of cases to show you that we have worked for the company's interest as well as our own. Not long since a gentleman in Dunedin, Mr. Guthrie, chartered a vessel called the "Gerda," and had made arrangements for three more to come. The "Gerda" was completed, and came down here and had firemen and trimmers engaged on board of her at £3 10s. per month, and they were signed on articles for three years. The captain was a foreigner and so were all the rest of the officers. The Union Steamship Company wanted to know if the Seamen's Union would allow that boat to be run in opposition to them, and, if so, how could they compete with that boat while the wages paid on her were half what they paid. In justice to the company, and also from our own point of view, we interviewed the captain of this vessel and asked him to put his men on the same rate of wages as the members of the Seamen's Union; but he declined to do it, saying he could not. "The men," he said, "had signed for three years, and he should put them in gaol if they refused to work." He left Port Chalmers, and went down to Greymouth—

Mr. Seymour: It was Wellington she came to. I was secretary of our branch at the time.

Mr. Millar: She went to Greymouth for a cargo of coal, but on arriving there she was met by the union, and the captain was told that no coal would be supplied to her until she had complied with the rules of the Seamen's Union, and before he got an ounce of coal he had to sign a written guarantee that he would make all his men join the union and put her on the same rates as the Union Steamship Company's boats. Then, there was another hardship which militated against the interests of the Union Steamship Company. The Chinese Navigation boats were bringing down tea from China. Sometimes four or five of them came down during the season to Sydney, and the first three boats would discharge their tea for New Zealand, and it would be stored in Sydney, and the fourth that came down would discharge the tea for Australia, take in the balance of the New Zealand tea, and distribute it themselves. The matter was pointed out to me, and I negotiated with our secretary in Sydney and asked him to interview the proper authorities, requesting them to prevent this; otherwise, if this sort of thing was insisted on, we should consider they were working against the interests of the Seamen's Union. That interview had such good effect that they have never carried tea from Sydney since that time to New Zealand. Then, there is another case: the "Janet Nicol" was running across here, chartered by C. W. Turner, carrying three firemen and a donkey man—two men less than other boats were carrying. The secretary of the Union Steamship Company came to me and said it was unjust that this vessel should run with such a complement of men, whilst his company's boats were compelled to carry six. I admitted it, and set myself to work, with the result that six men were ultimately put in the "Janet Nicol," and they were all on the same footing. We have endeavoured to do all that we could, both for the Union Company's benefit and our own, being perfectly willing to give them every assistance, and determined that no one else should come on this coast to handicap them. When the "Centennial" came down here I had a complaint from Lyttelton from the Union Company's officer, in consequence of which I compelled them to either employ labour to work down the hold or have seamen for the winches, as I would not allow firemen to work the winches here, whatever they did in New South Wales. Mr. McLean talked about the Co-operative Steamship Company, and said I was trying very hard to work this up; but I have nothing to do with it, and shall say little or nothing to-day about it. It is purely a business venture on the part of other people, and I may possibly take an interest in it or I may not. I have nothing to do with it whatever. But, in connection with this, he mentioned the splendid way in which we managed to work the "Bellinger," and the great success we made of the shipping venture up North! I am not ashamed to say what loss we sustained, or what was the loss of the Northern Company. When we started to run in opposition to them it was not with an idea of making money, nor on commercial principles, but to make the Northern Company's losses as heavy as possible. We started with a cheap boat, knowing that we lost £200 a month, and that they were losing £400, and we kept that going until the Northern Company had enough of it, even after the Shipowners' Association allowing them £1,000 a month.

Mr. McLean: They never allowed them that.

Mr. Millar: They allowed them £500, with a guarantee up to £1,000, if required. If you say they did not do so, I can only state that Mr. Mills said they did. Anyhow, the association gave them a guarantee for £500 per month, but I am given to understand there was a guarantee to increase it to £1,000, if necessary. They told us they were a body representing eight millions of capital, but they did not succeed in doing what they intended.

Hon. Mr. McLean: Oh, yes! they did.

Mr. Millar: I beg pardon. Every man belonging to the union went back into the boats with an increase of wages, and it cost the Northern Company £22,000, while our loss was £14,000; and if every venture of ours turned out as successfully as this did we should not mind spending another £14,000. Then, you ask if there had been any balance-sheet of the expenses submitted. I think every gentleman in this room on our side has received a balance-sheet. They used to receive monthly balances of the whole expenditure and receipts for the month, and also one of all moneys received from the beginning, and it was vouched for by two of the principal accountants in Auckland.

Hon. Mr. McLean: I never said there was any doubt about Mr. Millar submitting balance-sheets to his own people, but I ask, did he submit that good balance-sheet to the new Colonial Industrial Co-operative Shipping Company to induce people to take shares?—(Laughter.)—I never insinuated that he did anything wrong with the balance-sheet. As to a new steamship company being started under the Seamen's Union, if they like to go in for a new steamship company I shall hail it with delight, and if they do not I shall not grieve. I do not suppose it will do us much harm whether it comes or does not.

Mr. Millar: You told us just now that if I took the embargo off the seamen and firemen they would go back in a fortnight. I would not give them a fortnight; in twenty-four hours they would go back, and be very glad to do so. I have never denied it. I have never said that they came out

through any spite against you; but they will not go back with my sanction, anyhow, until we have come to a fair understanding over this dispute. If the company once agree that each society has perfect freedom to do what it likes outside their contract, I have no doubt the men would go back to-morrow. You say you have an unlimited quantity of officers and cooks and stewards. The quantity I will not deny, the quality I do.

Hon. Mr. McLean: The quality are old hands come back again.

Mr. Millar: The quality, sir, are men dismissed for drunkenness, and men too old for the service. One man taken was a cockatoo, and he came and showed me certificates.

Hon. Mr. McLean: I will make a denial of what he is saying. We have plenty of our old and best hands wanting to come back to us now.

Mr. Millar: All I have to say is this: I can mention men dismissed from your company—men you have refused, and if you desire me to give their names before the members of the Conference I will do so. I do not know what applications you have from the officers; I am talking about the quality of the officers you have at present at work, not those who may hereafter go to work. I am confident the officers would be quite prepared to go back to work to-morrow if they got the opportunity. If the vessels are running with competent men, and everything is satisfactory, there can be no necessity for any of our men. But one thing is passing strange. If the vessels are running with such competent men, how is it when they get into port—especially in the case of the Sydney boats—that they require a testimonial to be given to the captain for his great abilities shown in working the vessel under trying circumstances? If the men are thoroughly competent and know their work, where can the trying circumstances for the officers be? In my humble opinion these testimonials must be manufactured wholesale in Sydney and passed on board ship ready for signature before they come here. We never heard anything of this sort in the old days. And the company is supposed to have a regulation to the effect that no man shall receive a testimonial unless it comes from the office direct: it must be signed in the office; yet we see these cases mentioned in the papers where a captain or steward has received a presentation “owing to the trying circumstances.” There must be “something rotten in the state of Denmark” for these testimonials to be required. Now, I do not know, gentlemen, but in my humble opinion the bond which the Shipowners’ Association agreed to sign expired on the 1st October. My information may not be correct or it may be correct; but I believe that each individual company is perfectly free to do what they like just now, and I expect advices shortly from the other side as to what the Union Company is going to do.

Hon. Mr. McLean: Your information is all wrong.

Mr. Millar: Of course it may be. I may have been led astray from beginning to end. I am in constant communication, and possibly I may have been all wrong from beginning to end, as I have said. If so, we shall have to be the sufferers. Mr. McLean also stated that, as far as the directors of the Union Steamship Company were aware, the Grey Valley Coal Company had not refused to give them coal. Now, I should just like to ask Mr. McLean to answer if it never struck him or his directors as a peculiar thing that their boats should leave the Grey one after the other without any coal without an inquiry into the cause of it. There were a dozen boats left Greymouth belonging to the Union Steamship Company without an ounce of coal.

Hon. Mr. McLean: These are exaggerated statements. There were not a dozen altogether that left Greymouth since the strike, and we then had plenty of coal at Westport.

Mr. Millar: But they left the Grey without coal, Mr. McLean.

Hon. Mr. McLean: Only two or three boats. We have coal at Westport. These statements are so exaggerated that I shall take no further notice of them.

Mr. Millar: All I have to say is this: If they are exaggerated, I should like Mr. McLean to deny them.

Hon. Mr. McLean: So I do.

Mr. Millar: One by one—not in a general statement. I am making a statement I am prepared to substantiate, and, if Mr. McLean says it is wrong and wants a proof, I have the Greymouth people here and will ask them to name the boats which have gone in and out of Greymouth since the dispute took place. Mr. Boase, can you tell me how many boats have gone in and out of Greymouth?

Hon. Mr. McLean: I am not going to take notice of any statements made after this. I shall allow Mr. Millar to make any statement he pleases.

Mr. Millar: I am only making them because you made certain statements. I am only doing it in self-defence. I feel bound to defend our action, and I say it seems passing strange that your boats should have gone in and out of Greymouth—perhaps half a dozen or more—without coal, and the directors did not know why. Then, as to the rates of passage-money. Of course that has nothing to do with us, but I can say, before this dispute took place on the other side I travelled from Melbourne to Sydney in the “Burrumbeet” for £3 15s. It was almost as good as the Union Company—four days’ steaming, and the same attendance as the Union Steamship Company gives, for £3 15s.; and I had to pay £3 from Lyttelton to Wellington, which was thirty-four hours’ steam, though if you go in one of the fast boats you do it in twenty-five hours. I do not see, therefore, when you come to quote fares, that our fares in New Zealand are remarkably cheap, although I do not mean to say they are extortionate.

Hon. Mr. McLean: It is a mistake.

Mr. Millar: I make it, Mr. McLean, as a distinct assertion, and it can be borne out by any person who likes. Two years ago, at the time of the Melbourne Exhibition—when there were no excursion fares—I travelled from Melbourne to Sydney in the “Burrumbeet” with a return ticket for £3 15s. That was before the competition commenced. Latterly it has been £1. Before the strike you could go from Brisbane to Sydney for £1, and from Melbourne to Sydney for £1. They were cutting each other’s throats, and there is no reason why we should bear the brunt of it. Then, there is another matter which I certainly intend to say more about. There has been

some question upon it, and, as this is going to be an official report, I wish it put in—that is to say, that men were provided with “discharges” in Dunedin. It shows how some of our so-called “able seamen” were made competent. A man called Worthington, a painter, in South Dunedin, gave discharges to any men who applied for them; and another man at North-east Valley, who keeps a grocer’s store, also supplied discharges to any person who asked for one. They had not only one or two, but this man Worthington had a cigar-box full of them. When we heard of this we sent three men out to see if they could procure discharges. One man, who was thirty years of age, asked for a discharge, and, after a lot of talking and one thing and another, the man put his hand in the cigar-box and took out a bundle and gave him out one for a man thirty-three years of age. Another was a lad of seventeen years old, and he had not a discharge to suit him, so he said he would meet him opposite the Bank of New Zealand the next day at 3 o’clock and he would drop him one on the pavement. He would not take anything for it, but said, “If you get a permanent billet with the Union Company you can give me something for it.” A gentleman to whom I went said I must make the men ship before I could take any action. Now, were all those discharges given to one individual? There is only one of three places they could have come from—either from the Union Company’s offices, or one of the Foreign Consuls’ offices, or the Customhouse. There is no other place they could have possibly come from, because no man could have got the bundle of discharges this man had if they had not been supplied from one of those sources. The grocer at the North-east Valley told the man who applied to him that he could not give him one, “as they were called back to the office,” but he declined to state which office. Witnesses I have can prove what I have stated. This is how some of the so-called “able seamen” have been made able seamen at the present time. Mr. McLean said the Act did not work well here, because there was a most unjust clause in it.

The Chairman: He said one clause was good.

Mr. Millar: Yes, that was the qualification for the firemen. On the other side, in Victoria and New South Wales, no man is allowed to sign on a ship’s articles until he presents his discharge and shows just cause why he should get permission, and he has to present his discharge when he ships. The moment he ships it is crossed in red ink and is cancelled, and it leaves only one discharge for one man, and you see the reason of the difficulty in procuring competent men on the other side. That is why Victoria and New South Wales have not been able to man their boats in the same haphazard way as in New Zealand. There is an English Act which covers the matter altogether—viz., the Passenger Act of 1885. This throws the onus of responsibility on the Collector of Customs, or the officer in charge who looks after the vessels leaving, of permitting any ship to go to sea except under proper conditions. If this responsibility had been resting on the shoulders of some of our Collectors of Customs here they would not have allowed some of the boats to go out; but, having no responsibility, they have not troubled their heads. There is another thing I take exception to, and intend to bring prominently before the Premier and the public. There has been a new society formed, of ships’ officers, and so forth, and they have a perfect right to do this, but I object to a Government servant taking an office in it. At the present moment Captain Edwin, who is an examiner of officers, is president of this society, and I protest against that—not that it will ever affect me, because I have my master’s certificate, and will not go before him—but whilst he occupies the office of president of this society no man outside that society will obtain justice.

Hon. Mr. McLean: He is not president. Mr. Levin is president.

Mr. Millar: He is a vice-president, or one of the officers; and I maintain that no Government official should hold office in a party society such as this—because there is no denying it is a party society. Both the examiners in Dunedin and Auckland have likewise taken office, and it is scandalous to the country if they are allowed to do so. Now, gentlemen, the real point at issue Mr. McLean has touched on very lightly—namely, the question of unionism and non-unionism working together; and the argument adduced by him in favour of unionists and non-unionists working together is that ten years ago there was no union of the stewards and cooks, and that the Seamen’s Union had no objection to sailing with non-union men; but since that time the stewards and cooks have formed a union, and so have most other bodies. I would like to inform Mr. McLean, if he is labouring under a misapprehension, that we do not decline to work with non-union men providing there is no society governing the branch of trade they are working for, nor do we decline to work with non-union men if no members of the union are available; but we protest against working with non-unionist men whilst there is a society governing the branch of trade those non-union men belong to. If there was no society of stewards and cooks, we should not say we would not go to sea with non-union stewards and cooks, because this would be folly. But there is a society of stewards and cooks. We have gone to sea with non-unionist men when it would not be infringing any society’s rule. It seems to me to be a bogey altogether, this cry about union and non-union labour. I say emphatically that where a society is in existence, and has a rule saying its members shall not sail with non-union men, we will not do so; but if a society has a rule permitting working with non-union men, we will work with them as long as it is under the rules of the society. If men are working against the interests of the rules of the society, we have a right to say if we will work with them or not. We are prepared to go into this question to any depth they like, but Mr. McLean has not gone into it to any depth at all. It has been explained why we will not work with non-unionist men. We do not see why we should make continual sacrifice of ourselves for their benefit. They ought to deny themselves as much as we had to if they intend to get the same privileges; and until they are prepared to do that we decline to work with them. This we maintain is a fair contention; and we are prepared to substantiate it before the most unbiassed persons that we have no right to sacrifice ourselves to non-union men. It is said that non-union men are in the majority; but I challenge any one to show that there is a majority of non-union men in any trade they like. I contend that we are in the majority, and that the minority ought to bow to the majority, as they do in all other cases, and as we are compelled to do in regard to the laws of the country. One objection raised to affiliation has not been touched upon to-day—namely, that the discipline is interfered with on

board the ships by the affiliation of the officers. That has never been dealt with, nor is it likely to be dealt with, because I fail to see how any person could bring an argument forward to support such a contention. The only argument is that it has not taken place before and should not do so now, and there is no argument in that; and the best way out of it is to go on for six or twelve months, and if at the end of that time it is found to be a fact that the officers' affiliation with the Maritime Council is detrimental to the maintenance of discipline on board the ships, the officers will be the first to say "We will leave." Do you mean to say that the officers cannot look after themselves, and will not maintain discipline? It is most childish to talk to us in such a way. I would like to have it clearly explained to me if it is detrimental. Mr. McLean has not taken that side, because he has always admitted that he has seen no objection to it; and I honestly believe he has ventured to do his best to get the other shipowners on the other side to see it in the same light. But unfortunately they have not seen it in the same light. If they could, there would be no difficulty. If we settled our difficulty here all right, and had looked at it in a reasonable way, they would settle it over there. They thought fit in their wisdom to ride the high horse, and would not settle it, and there has been a heavy loss to employers and employed throughout the whole colony, and a loss which is likely to be much larger before any settlement is come to. If they would only settle this point, that the officers shall have the right and freedom to affiliate with any other body, the trouble would be ended to-morrow. Upon other matters we are quite prepared to confer with Mr. McLean at once, but that one principle generally must be admitted. They have admitted the right of the individual to join a society, and they cannot deny the right of the society to affiliate itself with any one else, because it is the extension of the principle. If they can admit that, then I say there is a hope of a settlement. As Mr. McLean has kindly said he is quite prepared to meet any person to discuss the matter with the object of coming to a settlement, it would perhaps be best for three or four members of this Conference to be deputed to talk the matter over with him, to see if there is any prospect of a settlement. We do not want to sit here a week going over the same old ground, and if Mr. McLean thinks there is a prospect of a settlement being come to we would stay any length of time, to see if we could not come to some arrangement, because I believe we are all honest in our intention to get this dispute settled at the earliest possible date, and I trust when we both go back to Dunedin we shall be in a position to say it is actually settled, or that we are in a fair way of settling it at an early date. If this proposal should meet with the approval of Mr. McLean, and the other delegates, I would suggest that at the conclusion of this day's sitting we should appoint, say, three or four delegates to meet Mr. McLean, and see if there is any possibility of the employers giving way upon any point, and any possibility also of our giving way on any point, and thereby coming to a settlement of the whole question. I think, gentlemen, I have gone sufficiently into the matter, and if I have said anything which has given offence to Mr. McLean I would assure him that it was not done intentionally. Personally, I have simply defended our side from certain statements made, and in doing so I have stated some hard facts; but still I feel that it is better at a time like this to tell the truth straight out—(Hear, hear)—because, if we speak out straightforwardly, no matter if it gives offence or not, we are more likely to come to a settlement.

Mr. Boase : I cannot allow Mr. Millar to lie under the stigma of having misstated a thing, when it is in my power to affirm his statement, although I do not believe that Mr. McLean would intentionally impute misstatement to Mr. Millar. I have no doubt whatever in my own mind that Mr. McLean thoroughly believes that no boat left Greymouth without being able to get coals; but I can name several boats.

The Chairman : He did not say that a single boat had not left.

Mr. Boase : It does not matter how many. I understood Mr. McLean to contradict Mr. Millar, and to say that no boats had left.

A Delegate : No; three.

The Chairman : It was only as to number.

Mr. Boase : Then that settles the question. No one is more ready to yield in a misunderstanding than myself. I took it to mean that no boats had left Greymouth without coals, or, if they did, that they could get coals at Westport; and Mr. Millar asked why, if there was no agreement that boats should leave Greymouth without coals. It would seem that there was an agreement, and while that agreement was preserved unbroken the boats belonging to the Union Steamship Company had to leave Greymouth without coals while there was some 800 or 1,000 tons lying by the side of the boats, on the wharf.

Hon. Mr. McLean : I should like to say, as to the question of the boats, that under ordinary circumstances some do leave Greymouth without coal, and take it at Westport. I did not say that no boats left in this way. But Mr. Millar said a dozen had, and I do not believe a dozen have been there since the strike altogether. I am not, however, going to take any notice of these exaggerated statements. But I do protest against Mr. Millar insinuating that those false discharges came from the Union Company. It is monstrous for a man like him to say that a respectable company would lend itself to such a thing. I could not sit here without contradicting such a statement that any one connected with us would ever dare do such a thing.

Mr. Millar : I did not make a direct assertion against the Union Steamship Company. I said it occurred to me that it was impossible for any one man to hold such a quantity of discharges as a cigar-box full, and there were only three sources from which they could have come. I did not imply that the Union Steamship Company had given them—they might not have given a single discharge; but I know a number of discharges get into the company's offices through men leaving them, and the foreign consuls get discharges through men running away, and I know also that the Customhouse gets a lot of them, and no individual person occupying that position, as I have stated, could have had so many discharges in his possession as those men had if they had not come from some official source.

Mr. Ansell : I should like to make a few remarks in answer to statements of Mr. McLean this

morning. As to the Employers' Union, I think, myself, that it would have been all the better had there been such a union for some time past, because where there is a strict employers' union there is always less friction. In the North of England there is a strong employers' association, which does more business than that of the whole of New Zealand put together; and there is also a strong association of men. A Board of Conciliation has been formed, and there has scarcely been a dispute during the whole time of its existence—the only time there was a dispute was when the employers tried to break away from the Board of Conciliation; the result being that there is a perfect guarantee for the carrying-on of the business of the associations. And in the coal trade in the North of England this principle has always been found to work in a first-class manner. Before associations were formed in this way there were always these strikes, because there was never any one to control them. As to "the flower of the labour of New Zealand," I do not wish to say anything about that further than that I see from a statement in the paper that a certain quantity of the "flower of New Zealand" is going to be sent to the mines, and it will take a good deal of Pears's soap to bring them back to the flower after they have worked a few months in the mines.—(Laughter.)—In regard to the statement of Mr. McLean as to the benefit conferred on the West Coast—on Greymouth and the Grey Valley—since the taking-over of these mines, I may say that in the first six months of 1888, before the transaction, we had 250 men employed in hewing coal; but in the corresponding six months of 1889, after the company had taken possession and was working the mine, we had 155 employed in hewing coal.

Hon. Mr. McLean: I explained that.

Mr. Ansell: I am taking the normal period, and all I can say is that the number of men has gone on declining. And at the time I am speaking about, July, 1889, we had no less than sixty hewers less; and you know very well what that means. And we have had to pay passages for other men going away. And I am quite sure, if everything was put into working-order to-morrow, a large portion of the population would have to leave Greymouth because the mines are not in the condition for the employment of the men there are there.

Mr. Hoban: I just want to say that I think Mr. Millar's suggestion a very good one indeed. We might discuss this matter until doomsday, and then arrive at nothing definite. If the Hon. George McLean thought it desirable, it would, I think, be better for this Conference to appoint three or four from their number now we have heard both sides of the question, and try to arrive at some basis of settlement. Mr. Millar's is a very good suggestion, and I should like to see it carried out. I would like to know Mr. McLean's opinion about the matter—whether he agrees with the suggestion. He must see for himself that while we are all talking one after another there is no basis of settlement being arrived at one way or the other. There is no necessity to discuss the matters in dispute at any further length now, and the sooner we adopt the suggestion of Mr. Millar, if agreeable to Mr. McLean, the better.

Hon. Mr. McLean: Mr. Millar has made one condition which is nothing in substance, but which I could not agree with, and that is as to the officers' affiliation. There is no affiliation now, because the old association has gone, and the other one does not want to affiliate with anybody. The old association is done for now, and a superior association takes its place; and if that point is made a positive thing it would be no good in my meeting them. I shall be very glad to meet and discuss the whole matter with anybody; but it is no good if you meet and discuss and lay down certain things. It is as well to be plain: if you want conference it should not be conditional. If you want conditions, what is the use of the Conference?—(Hear, hear.)—It is no use with all these grand conditions he makes.

Mr. R. P. Johnson: I would say that when, on the one hand, this morning, Mr. McLean asked in the most perfect good faith, "What are we to do, under a certain aspect of affairs, with the two thousand men in our employ?" there can be no doubt he laid himself open to certain suggestions being made to him. And I gather from that that there was an evident desire on the part of the Hon. Mr. McLean to meet this Conference, or any portion of it that may be delegated to meet him, in a friendly and conciliatory spirit. I take your remarks, sir, as an indication of that; and one cannot help coupling that statement with Mr. Millar's, and wondering how it would be if the common-sense of both parties could come together and see if some arrangement could not be come to in the face of such willingness on both sides. Mr. Millar's statement was more emphatic and clearer than Mr. McLean's indicated willingness, for Mr. Millar says, "I shall be very glad indeed to meet Mr. McLean and discuss the matter before he goes away—at the end of this sitting even—and come to some basis of settlement." Mr. McLean's remark on the one side and Mr. Millar's on the other seem to make up the shell of the nut, but the kernel is the settlement, and from the two statements made to-day there seems to me to be some of the kernel likely to be got at. I hope from this, sir, that we shall have what is generally shown in such cases, the idea of a compromise; and that compromise had much better be effected *in camera* than in a meeting of this kind, with reporters present. And I say that, in the interests of humanity, in the interests of the trades of the country, would it not be better for some one to name a delegation from this Conference to meet Mr. McLean and try to arrive at some basis of settlement?

Mr. Meyer: On the understanding that both sides may be able to come to some conclusion in the matter, I wish to move that Messrs. Winter, Sandford, Millar, Lomas, and Fisher be appointed a deputation to confer with the Hon. Mr. McLean, and to try and come to some arrangement between themselves and report to this meeting.

Mr. R. P. Johnson: I shall be happy to second that, as it was exactly what I was trying to arrive at.

Mr. F. C. Millar: I think five too many, and that it would be better to appoint only three as a deputation. Perhaps Mr. Meyer would be willing to alter his proposition to that effect.

Hon. Mr. McLean: I would suggest that if there is to be anything of this sort you should select some impartial men outside the Maritime Council, because if some impartial men are appointed it will be better.

Mr. R. P. Johnson : I should assume Mr. McLean means that in a sense of an arbitration, and not merely as a Conference. If in the sense of an arbitration, both parties should go into the thing at once, prepared to abide by the arbitration; but I take it, sir, that the feeling rather is that you should first try to settle it for yourselves.

Hon. Mr. McLean : I could not arbitrate, as I have other people to consult when I come to close quarters. I am not my own master. I must not do things which probably there would not be a settlement in after all, however willing I myself might be to settle. If it is settled we must settle it in such a way that other parties will agree to it. I am not arbitrator of all New Zealand, like my friend Mr. Millar. I have a lot of masters, I can assure you, and am a very humble individual myself. I am very willing and anxious to discuss it with you, but I must tell you candidly that I must carry other people with me in agreeing to a settlement.

Mr. Meyer : Mr. Chairman, allow me to point out that I mentioned two names—Messrs. Winter and Sandford—as two who are outside the real question.

Hon. Mr. McLean : They are both in it.

Mr. Elvines : I should like to ask the Hon. Mr. McLean if he has any one he would like to nominate to sit with him, as I think the nomination should rest with him.

Mr. Winter : There is this difficulty in Mr. McLean's suggestion : that if outsiders go in now we should have to go through the whole thing *de novo*, as an outsider would not know the ins and outs of the affair.

Hon. Mr. McLean : I do not mean any one outside this Conference.

Mr. Mills : I would commend to the Conference a proposition that we should adjourn now until two hours hence, or till 10 o'clock to-morrow morning, as by that time Mr. McLean may be able to consult with any parties he desires to argue the point with. That I think would be a step to lead us more quickly towards a settlement, and would save time really in the end, and be better than rushing into it. I move, as an amendment, in order to test the feeling of the Conference, that we do now adjourn till 10 o'clock to-morrow morning.

Mr. Hutchison : I second the amendment. At the end of our private meeting we should be able to submit a list of names to Mr. McLean from which he might select suitable men.

Hon. Mr. McLean : I shall not say who you should elect or not. I only suggest that, as the feelings of the Maritime Council are rather raised in the matter—perhaps mine are too—it would be better to get men who are impartial in their ideas of what would be right or wrong to settle. That is all, and I shall be glad if you will settle it amongst yourselves. I leave you free to elect any one you like. As I have already said, I am quite ready to discuss the difficulty freely with any of you at any time.

Mr. R. P. Johnson : Would it not be better, Mr. McLean, for the different bodies to appoint three, say, and you select two others from the Conference.

Hon. Mr. McLean : I do not want to select any one.

Mr. Dobson : I should be inclined to support the amendment. As Mr. McLean would like to have some one outside the Maritime Council and, probably, the miners, we could work upon that at a caucus meeting, and appoint delegates to wait upon Mr. McLean; and in the meantime he could do as he wished in connection with himself, as to having some one from the Union Steamship Company with him.

Mr. Elvines : I shall vote for the proposition, and I would suggest Mr. Sandford as a gentleman outside the Maritime Council. He is impartial in the matter.

A Delegate suggested the name of Mr. Hoban.

Hon. Mr. McLean : I forgot. I was going to say a few words to Mr. Hoban. In my opinion, it was unwise to bring a lawyer into this matter at all. His speech was not conciliatory, but misrepresented everything I said. I think myself that you do not get smoothness by bringing outsiders into your affairs. I am not saying this with any ill-will; but it is just the nature of a lawyer—a lawyer must see one side.

Mr. Hoban : I cannot allow that statement to go uncontradicted. I allow no man to speak so of me in a meeting like this. The meeting can say if I made any wilful misstatement—and I defy any one in the room to point out to me one misstatement that I made. I cannot allow any such reflections to be cast upon my profession. We have come here to discuss the matter, and make our remarks in due fairness, and my colleagues would be the first to hoot me down if I made any misstatement. If this went broadcast into the papers that I, the president of an important union, came here and wilfully misrepresented matters to this meeting, how would they look upon me?

Hon. Mr. McLean : I said lawyers.

Mr. Hoban : I do not appear here as a professional man in any shape or form. When we go into a matter of this kind we leave business outside, and try to do the best towards a settlement of a dispute which is affecting every man in the colony, whether a unionist or non-unionist. I am sorry you made that statement, sir, as it is not altogether correct.

The Chairman : I think Mr. McLean was unfortunate in referring to the matter at all. We have got on very nicely all through the Conference; and I consider it my duty to compliment the Conference on the temperate and conciliatory spirit which has prevailed. At the eleventh hour, however, this turns up, but I hope it will drop from this instant, and that we shall hear no more about it. Coming to the amendment, I think it would be best to set up the delegation and adjourn. The delegates could then assemble, and, if need be, confer with the newly-appointed delegation, who could receive instructions from them. The newly-appointed delegation would probably be in a position to-morrow morning to meet the Hon. George McLean or any other gentleman he may have to represent him, with propositions. It would be a mistake to introduce fresh blood into this matter at this stage, because, if you do, it would only mean going into the whole thing again. There is nothing to be gained, in my humble opinion, by going into the origin of the difficulty. It is here, no matter who is to blame for bringing it about, whether officers, seamen, wharf-labourers,

or any one else. That has nothing whatever to do with it now. As members of the community, it is our duty to try, in the best manner possible, to bring about a settlement. Do not take into account now how it arose. We might go on to the end of time and never satisfactorily clear up who was to blame for bringing it about. The difficulty is here, and let us now try, if we are all sincere in our professions, to ascertain in what way we can settle this with least harm to either side, and with the best possible advantage to all concerned; and that can only be done by dropping altogether the question of the origin of the difficulty. I could put forth plenty of argument, from my knowledge of the Maritime Council's business, that the Union Steamship Company have erred, while Mr. McLean might try to show how fallacious my arguments were. I do hope, gentlemen, that we have talked this out sufficiently to enable us to calmly sit down and come to a conclusion. Let us set up a delegation as suggested, and the labour representatives can talk amongst themselves as to how far they can make concessions, as, I take it, the Hon. Mr. McLean will have also to do on his part. If either side imagines for one moment that they will come out of this triumphantly they never made a greater mistake. Both must be prepared to give way to some extent, and I felt pleased to observe in his statement yesterday and to-day that Mr. McLean holds out a hand and says, "If you are willing to forget the past we will meet you and come to terms." I may have misunderstood him, but that is the interpretation I give to his speeches here. Now, as to the question of unionist and non-unionist labour working together, if you cannot concede that point, suppose you say you will propose a resolution that unionists and non-unionists should work together for a month, so as to give time to get the non-unionists into the union. In this way points might be conceded on both sides, and so speedily bring about a settlement, which must come if we are true to ourselves and Mr. McLean is true to himself. As to Mr. Millar's statements, they are made from the information that comes to him, and which he verifies as far as he can. I am convinced that Mr. Millar believes that what he states is absolutely true. It may be untruth, but he tried his level best to find out whether it was true or not, and went as far as it was necessary before believing that it was true. Mr. McLean says that it is untrue, and there is really nothing to be gained, therefore, by carrying on the argument. The difficulty is here, no matter who is to blame for it, and let us set our heads to work to find out how it can be settled.

Mr. Lomas : Ought we not to consult Mr. McLean as to the adjournment of the Conference? I understand that he is anxious to get home to-morrow; and, seeing that we have the majority of votes, we should consult him in the matter.

Mr. Hutcheson : We never intended to put the matter to the vote without consulting the interests of the other side.

The Chairman : If the resolution, either one way or the other, does not suit Mr. McLean he has the privilege of saying so.

The amendment for adjournment until the following morning was then put and lost.

The Chairman : The motion now is, That a deputation of five, consisting of Messrs. Winter Sandford, J. A. Millar, Lomas, and Fisher, be appointed to confer with the Hon. Mr. McLean with a view to a settlement of the present difficulty.

Mr. Dobson : It appears to me, sir, that the amendment which has just been lost might have been explained by you to mean that at the adjournment the members would have a caucus meeting to appoint a delegation to wait upon Mr. McLean at 10 o'clock to-morrow morning. You are putting the resolution, and members who were against the amendment are also against the resolution, except as to the nomination of the delegates, wishing to meet Mr. McLean in a different way. They will also vote against the resolution, and it will be lost.

Mr. R. P. Johnson : After hearing the lengthy discussion we have had here, the delegation named have brain-power enough to conduct a conference with Mr. McLean without any further instructions from a caucus gathering. I do not see how there could be a really clouded view of the amendment or the resolution.

Mr. Ansell : I would like to bring another thing before your notice. As wharf-labourers are largely concerned in this matter, it would not be amiss if this Conference were to add the name of Mr. Peter Brown.

Mr. Meyer : I did not overlook the wharf-labourers, Mr. Chairman, when I mentioned your own name, as you are here to represent them.

The name of Mr. P. Brown was added to the list, and the motion then carried on the voices.

Mr. Meyer : Can we find out when this conference is going to take place between the Hon. Mr. McLean and the delegates just appointed?

Mr. Ansell : I think it should be left to Mr. McLean to arrange that.

Mr. Jones : It would be as well to let us understand if we are to have a private meeting or not.

Hon. Mr. McLean : I was going to suggest that we should fight it out to-night, somehow or other; but Mr. Fisher says you have an important meeting, and I do not wish to interfere with it. However, if you cannot meet to-night my time will be at your service in the morning.

The Chairman : What hour would suit you?

Hon. Mr. McLean : I am not particular; but I like to get an hour's work done in the morning—say, 10 o'clock.

Mr. R. P. Johnson : Will it be necessary for us, as a Conference, to meet again at all?

The Chairman : Oh yes.

Mr. F. C. Millar : I move, That we adjourn until Monday morning at 10 o'clock.

Mr. Meyer : I beg to second that, sir.

Mr. Jones : Is it to be understood that a private meeting of delegates will be held this evening prior to the deputation waiting upon Mr. McLean? If the deputation are allowed to settle the matter it will go forth that it has been with the consent of this Conference, whereas they may differ entirely from the arrangement come to.

The Chairman : I hope the labour delegates will understand that we shall have an informal

meeting amongst ourselves after the Conference closes to-day. The question now before the meeting is that we adjourn until 10 o'clock on Monday morning.

Captain Highman : I should like to ask Mr. McLean, before we separate, if I understood him to say that the Mercantile Marine Officers' Association was no longer in existence?

Hon. Mr. McLean : I did not say it was not in existence; I said it would be "up in the moon."

Captain Highman : This new Masters' Association is the recognised thing in your estimation, as it really emanated from the Union Steamship Company, and you foster it. I distinctly understood you to say that the old association was no longer in existence. It was doubtful if you referred to the association you successfully quashed five or six years ago or this one formed this year.

Hon. Mr. McLean : It was this one, and it has pretty well quashed itself.

Captain Highman : And in your speech you make the statement that you had no objection whatever to the Officers' Association.

Hon. Mr. McLean : And I have not.

Captain Highman : At the beginning of your speech you led us to believe you had no vindictive spirit or anything of that sort, or wished to raise the ire of any one or tread on any one's toes. It now remains for me to give an emphatic denial to the statement that the association is quashed. It is in existence, and there are a number of members now who are out of their ships, but are staunch and true to the association, and do not mean to let it be quashed as you suggest.

At 4.30 p.m. the Conference adjourned till 10 o'clock on Monday, the 6th October.

MONDAY, 6TH OCTOBER, 1890.

The Conference assembled at 10 o'clock a.m.

Present : Mr. Ansell, Mr. Avery, Mr. Boase, Mr. Browett, Mr. P. Brown, Mr. Cornish, Mr. Dobson, Mr. Elvines, Mr. D. P. Fisher (Chairman), Mr. J. Graham, Captain Highman, Mr. Hoban, Mr. Hutcheson, Mr. Lomas, Mr. Meyer, the Hon. G. McLean, Mr. J. A. Millar, Mr. F. C. Millar, Mr. T. L. Mills, Mr. Mudge, Mr. Parker, Mr. Sandford, Mr. R. Seymour, Mr. Tees, Mr. Williams, Mr. Winter.

The Chairman reported that the delegates appointed at the previous meeting had met the Hon. Mr. McLean, but that no agreement had been come to. The following basis of agreement submitted by the delegates to Mr. McLean was then read:—(1.) The delegates agree to submit to their principals a basis of settlement, conditionally upon the Hon. G. McLean pursuing a similar course, as follows: (2.) That all competent hands at present in the employ of the Union Steamship Company be admitted to the unions without ballot, upon payment of the entrance-fee. (3.) That the Union Steamship Company undertake to recognise the Mercantile Marine Officers' Association, and the Seamen's Union undertake to recognise the new Shipmasters' Association, without prejudice to either body, and membership of either body be considered for mutual recognition. (4.) That all persons dismissed or called out shall be reinstated. (5.) That in future none but union men shall be employed where the rules of any union so provide, except under exceptional circumstances to be hereinafter agreed upon. (6.) That a bond be agreed upon between both parties guaranteeing that no strike or lock-out shall take place for one year, or such other period as may be agreed upon.

Hon. Mr. McLean : We have threshed this out a good deal among ourselves. This basis of settlement was given to me on the understanding that it was to be kept secret among ourselves, so I did not make any written reply. When I came here I thought it was not to be made use of. Still, I have given my sanction to its being made use of. As I have prepared no written reply, I will give you my reasons why I cannot accept it. The reason is because it goes back exactly to where we started from. We have pledged ourselves to those men whom we have taken into our employment that, come what may, they will remain in our employment without let or hindrance, and without compulsion to join any union. We have given them a pledge to that effect. I have made it clear to everybody that whatever may come we will stick to the men at present in our employment. To accept these proposals would be, in my opinion, simply throwing them over, and that is a thing we cannot do. Here is another reason: This completely puts us in the position of compelling all our men to join the union. That is the sum and substance of it. It looks, on the face of it, as if it were not so, but if we take the disguise off it it means that we must compel the men either to join the unions or leave the ships. That is a condition we cannot accept. Therefore, as you are determined to stick to the principle that non-union and union men shall not work together, there is little use discussing the matter any further and prolonging the Conference, for if there is that determination it is simply leading people to think there would be a chance of settlement when there could be no settlement. I may say at once that I could not venture to submit such a proposal as this to the shipowners. I came for the purpose of meeting you all here, and I am very glad I have met you; whatever may come of it we have exchanged ideas. As far as the Union Company is concerned, whatever may come of this, we are able to man our ships and to sail them. But even if we get the upper hand, the directors of the Union Company are big-hearted men, and will be generous even should they gain a complete victory. We have taken up a position from the beginning that probably makes things a little more difficult for us now, for, because of the fairness with which we have gone along, we have nothing to give you for anything you may have to give. If we had taken up the position at first that we would not have any of these men back, then perhaps we might have had something to give away. The men went from us themselves—of their own accord; we paid them up to the day they went, whether it was a legal obligation or not. We have replaced them by other men, and by running our steamers have provided two thousand men with good wages and good living. I know there is some difficulty in confessing a fault; there always is a difficulty about that; but when a man confesses his fault and does it in a handsome way, generally there is some reason to think that there is a chance of coming to settlement. Now, I believe that something good

will yet come out of this strike, although there is a great deal of trouble and suffering caused by it. But it did not happen here; it came to New Zealand through unfortunate circumstances, and I think, myself, that the thing might now be allowed to die out. You have this good to come out of it: that the unions will know how to frame their constitutions so as to avoid difficulties in future. You have also employers' associations formed throughout New Zealand, which will be of considerable benefit even to the unions, for you will be able to meet on a common platform. It is contended for the unions that they are good to equalise wages. There are good men in unions and there are bad men in unions; in employers' associations the same. But you will have genuine men on both sides clubbing together to effect good and keep all these objectionable people in the right course. This Conference will do good, in my opinion, in that way. Although it is of little use further discussing this matter, I am obliged to you all for the manner in which you have treated me, and for the consideration and courtesy you have shown towards me. I hope now that, whatever may come, we shall all leave as good friends as when we started.—(Applause.)

Mr. J. A. Millar: I can see by the terms of this basis of agreement that the delegates have done everything that was possible for them to do towards a compromise short of deserting the whole cause. I think I indorse the opinion of the delegates here assembled when I say that it is the determination of the unions not to work with non-union men. That was what I thought when I came to the Conference, and it is what I think now. We came here prepared to give way a little, in the hope that the employers would give way a little, and that so we might arrive at a settlement of the dispute. I have received a letter from the Trades and Labour Council of Auckland, in which they say it is the opinion of twenty-four societies, representing eight thousand men, that they will not give way on this question of union men not working with non-union men, and I am instructed not to give way on this point. You see, therefore, it is quite evident that the unions are firm on this point. The reason we do not give way in this matter has been already explained to you. I have simply to point out to you that the employers who are taking up the position which Mr. McLean, who represents them here, has taken up, are taking up an aggressive position. Almost every trade in the colony is working under these rules which the employers, who are now making so much noise about their determination, are objecting to. Nine-tenths of the trades have been organized upon the principle that union labour shall not work with non-union labour. It has been a recognised principle throughout the country. The employers have not been injured but benefited. They have not objected when the system was in full work, and I say again that the position they are taking up now is an aggressive position. It cannot be anything else, seeing that they are endeavouring to force the men out of the unions. Mr. McLean says this proposed agreement is going back to the old position. He has admitted that his company worked well with the unions up till then. His attitude now shows that he is taking up an aggressive position. I contend that the labour party are now placed on the defensive, whatever their position may have been in the past. He says we ought to confess our fault, because we have all our faults. I have yet to see where our fault lies. We were forced into the position which we had to take up. If Mr. McLean can show us this fault there is no man more willing than myself to declare that it is a fault. Up to the present I have not seen it. He objects to go back to the old position. This, as I have said, shows that his position must be aggressive. I do not think that a large body of men can be said to be wrong in taking up a defensive position, whatever may be said about an aggressive position. He says the proposed agreement is forcing the employers to compel their employes to join the unions. I do not know that there need be any forcing in the matter. I am not aware that the directors of the Union Company ever interfere with the men. They may with the officers; but, so far as the men—the cooks and stewards—are concerned, it is the head of a department that has to do with them. Those are the individuals who know where the best men are to be found. The men whom they select would be taken on at once. Every person knows that there are such things as unions, where the most competent men in their respective trades are to be found. If a man wants employment he tries to get into a union. Mr. McLean tells us the Union Company are sailing their ships. We admit it. It does not annoy me. I do not know anything about their sailing; we cannot stop their sailing, and do not want to do so. By-and-by, perhaps, we may be able to meet the employers on another footing altogether. It would almost seem as if neither side had quite enough of this business yet. The time will never come when I will sign for a non-union and a union man to work together—I will leave the country first. The men may go back if they please, but they will never go back with my sanction. Possibly the employers may complete their victory by some further act of aggression; but I think their next balance-sheet will show that it is the dearest victory they ever bought in their lives. This struggle is likely to do the men good; it will show that the true object of the employers is to crush unionism. But I can tell them that the time is not far off when the men they are employing now will have their union. The union is necessary for the protection of labour. Even some of these men, I am informed, struck the other day because they did not get plum-pudding. The employer may find that they will have more trouble with their new men than ever they had with their old men. Possibly in the course of a couple of months we may come to an agreement. I think it is a pity we cannot agree to this now. If this matter had been settled it is possible the whole of the societies all over the country would be satisfied. I can only say that we have done our best to find a basis of agreement. We have given way a lot. It is for the employers now to give something. We have agreed that all competent men shall be admitted to the union upon paying the ordinary entrance-fee. We do not care to have incompetent men who go "blacklegging" round the country in our societies. Whatever loss there has been to the country, I think the cause of it is on the side of the employers. I cannot say anything else.

Mr. Sandford: I think a word is due to the delegates here assembled. It was no doubt agreed that the basis of settlement which has been read should be kept secret until Mr. McLean and ourselves had agreed to a basis which we were prepared to submit to each of our principals. Seeing that we have failed to come to any agreement with Mr. McLean as to the main principle, I think it is only right

that this basis of agreement should be made public. He might have said, "I decline to settle." We might have said the same thing, and no one would be the wiser as to the grounds upon which we failed to come to terms, or the proposals for a basis of settlement which we were prepared to accept. I think the Conference will recognise that it is due to the delegates, and due to Mr. McLean himself, that our principals should know exactly what the basis is, and be in a position to judge whether or not there has been a fair and reasonable compromise proposed. I think the public will come to the conclusion that we have fairly tried to settle this matter. The capitalist party have come to a conclusion which, if maintained, is short of nothing but unconditional surrender. They may think they have effected the defeat of the labour party, but they may be assured that such is not the case. If ever human nature is forced on to its knees it immediately sets to work to regain its position. Human nature is still alive in unionist breasts. If the capitalists were in a position to-morrow to force unionism on to its knees and demand their own terms, although unionists are now scattered, they will at once commence preparations for another conflict—a conflict which in its results may be even more disastrous than this, because they will have greater financial power. I pointed out to a member of the Government recently that if the working-men should be treated unfairly, and driven to extremity by injustice done to their unions, there would grow up a tendency to secret societies. That is a tendency which, I believe, is even now beginning to take hold of working-men, and if such a tendency should be confirmed it will introduce a dangerous element into unionism which at present is absent. I give here a statement which I would be prepared to make on the public platform. I may wrong them, but I believe this idea has obtained some form and substance, not amongst the leaders of unionism, be it understood, but in the rank and file there is a small section which will gravitate towards secret societies in such circumstances as I have indicated. To provoke the formation of such societies constitutes an ultimate danger which, were complete justice done now, could be avoided.

Mr. Parker felt extremely sorry that the deliberations of the Conference had terminated in the manner that they had. He had strong hope that some settlement would have been arrived at—a settlement by which the condition of labour in the colony would be placed on a better footing than it was at the present time. He had hoped to return to his home the bearer of good news. He thought that the Hon. Mr. McLean might have conceded something to the position into which this struggle had got. He (*Mr. Parker*) was willing to stop in Wellington another week or fortnight to see if something definite could be arrived at.

Mr. Hoban regretted very much that the Conference should have come to a termination without any settlement. *Mr. McLean* had admitted that his company had worked well with union men. *Mr. McLean* bore testimony to the good work the union had done in the past. They accepted the position that union men would not work with non-union men. Why did they object to this principle now? No doubt boards of conciliation would be established in time. It was quite true that, if the employers succeeded in suppressing the unions, there was a probability that secret societies in some form or other would be started. It might be true that the Union Company's employment provided two thousand persons with a living, but that fact was no argument against unionism. Judging by what had happened, it appeared that the real object of the Union Company was to do away with unionism and bring cheap labour into the market. The Conference had conceded certain points, the company had conceded nothing. The employers were not anxious for a settlement. Their object rather seemed to put it off as long as possible. They were trying to crush the bone and sinew of the country. But the employers might depend upon it they would not succeed in suppressing whatever was just and right in the unions, which would, in the future, with redoubled energy, strengthen themselves.

Mr. Mills thought the time had now come when outside unionists should give expression to their opinions. The outside land unions had refrained from taking any part in the discussion, under the impression that by keeping out of it there would be a saving of time. The maritime bodies had expressed their opinion, and *Mr. McLean* had spoken for the Union Company. He believed the delegates had done everything that was possible to bring about an arrangement. Now, he thought all the representatives of unions should express their views. He (*Mr. Mills*) represented the New Zealand Typographical Association—an association whose members had always been in the van of unionism—and he was sent to the Conference as a unionist printer to give his voice in maintaining unionism; and in this standing he might say that the majority of the printers of our colony were with the leaders of this strike. It was not right that they should be silent on such an important occasion as the present. *Mr. McLean* had told them about advising a young friend of his to the effect that the first thing to be done was to have his name put on the books of the union. He was certainly then in sympathy with unionism. He at that time recognised the right of combination so far as the workmen were concerned. Under the old unionism the workmen were poorly off indeed; but under the new unionism labour combination could never be stamped out, as frequently happened in former days. The principle of unionism would go on progressing in spite of anything the Union Company or any other opposition could say or do against it. Opposition must only bring it more strongly to the front, for the new unionism had been found to be a benefit to society at large. Formerly, under old trades unionism, workers were compromised by the drinking habits, but with better combination and higher motives the new unionism had been introduced, with the result that thrift and sobriety became a feature in the conducting of the unions, and intemperance was strongly discountenanced. Where a man now came to his union drunk he was called to order very soon and punished, and if the offence were repeated he was expelled. Under the old unions the men gave way to their passions. Under the new they were accustomed to regard all matters affecting their interests with moderation and candour. If this question of unionism and non-unionism were looked at by employers square in the face they would see that the class of labour supplied through them to the market was greatly improved; and if the men were obliged to work with non-unionists they might just as well dissolve their unions. The

unions had for a long time to struggle against public opinion in many cases. It was the vital principle of unionism to combine for the improvement of labour as well as for the benefit of the men. Why should a unionist, who had contributed, perhaps, £10 to the support of his union, be asked to work alongside a man who never contributed a penny for the benefit of his trade; and was it reasonable to expect that in the case of two men working side by side under the conditions set forth by the Employers' Association, whilst one man (non-unionist), was not contributing to a union, the other (unionist) was going to pay in to a society which had for its object the keeping-up of the wages and social condition of his craft? The result of this Conference must prove a disappointment to the whole country. If Mr. McLean would meet the proposed basis of settlement only half-way there was still a hope that a settlement might be arrived at. If, however, he should take up the extreme position his words intimated, public opinion would come round to the unions. But that would take time, and much suffering might exist between that time and the present. The present time was therefore the proper time for a settlement. If there should be no settlement there was no escape from the conclusion that the Union Company had in view for its object the ruin of the unions.

Mr. Elwines could not allow the present attempt at a settlement to go forth without saying something as to the basis of agreement proposed. Hitherto he had been silent; but it was now time to speak. He believed the Union Company took up their position for the purpose of crushing unionism—that they were going to stem the tide which had now rolled on for fifty years. At first unions used to meet in secret: they might meet in secret still. As far back as thirty years ago he worked with a society which allowed no member to work with a non-union man. Did the employers think they could stop the tide that rolled on the sea shore? If they did they were mistaken. Neither could they stop the tide of humanity. Humanity would remain humanity to the end, and it must progress as the condition of its existence. If wrong means were taken to stop its progress its course would be all the more rapid. He disclaimed the reputation of a prophet; but he believed it would grow with still greater strength in New Zealand than before this struggle took place. One effect of it was to bring in labour from the country places. This would show those who knew nothing about it before what unionism in the towns really was, and how it could benefit the working-class. Thus, instead of crushing the unions, the Union Company would rather enlarge their liberty. He was, therefore, not sorry, regarding the matter from this point, that Mr. McLean had arrived at such a decision, though he would have liked to see the dispute settled. Even if men had to work with non-unionists there must be reaction, and that ere long. After so many years of working, after doing so much good work, was it likely that unionism would abandon its position without a struggle at some future time for the re-establishment of its claims? If all the working-men of New Zealand knew how good a thing unionism was they would cherish it in their hearts. If employers understood how beneficial it was to them they would not be so blind to their own interests as to attempt to do away with it.

Mr. Ansell thought the Union Company would not hear reason. They had procured a lot of labourers by denuding the agricultural districts, which would require the services of these men in the shearing and harvest seasons, and these men would only increase the difficulty that must take place whenever the company should choose to reduce their present hands. Even the Chinamen despised these men who were doing so much to injure the working-class, for when he (the Chinaman) was offered employment to discharge ships he said, "No; I no blackleg; I am Englishman." For they (the company) had gone to pick Chinese up from the Chinese quarter to discharge their ships. He wished to defend Mr. Millar from the attacks which had been made upon him by the Press. Mr. Millar had not been the sole or contributing cause of the strike, nor had he had the sole control of the action taken by the Maritime Council. He hoped the Press would take notice of this statement of his. He knew—everybody knew—that unionism had done a great deal for the Union Company. If both sides to the late dispute had been stronger a settlement would have been more likely. There had been considerable friction; but if there had been a sincere desire for a settlement on the part of the company, and a wish to adjust the fair claims of the unions, there would have been no friction. With regard to union men working with non-union men, candidly he must say that he would not go back to the place he came from and tell them there that he had in this Conference agreed that the members of unions should work with non-union labour; and he believed the time was not far distant when non-union men would find to their cost that they have wronged themselves as well as their fellow-workmen of the unions; for no man shortly, whatever his condition may be, would be able to live in this world without combining. The capitalist was combining everywhere to get labour at the cheapest rate, and cheap labour meant injury to the competent worker. It appeared to him as if capital and the Government were working together. Thirty policemen had been sent to the West Coast, where there was no necessity for them, unless it was intended to provoke a collision. He still hoped the Union Company and the other employers of labour would reconsider the whole question. Secret societies had been the curse of the world in the past. Did capitalists wish to expose this young colony for the future to that curse? The moment physical power was employed every one knew what the consequences would be. God forbid that it ever should be so. He hoped that the hand of friendship would still be extended by both employers and employed; that they could always say to each other, "Come, let us gather round this table, and discuss and settle all our differences." Let them do right by each other, and if capital be wrong let capital give way; if labour be wrong let labour do the same.

The Chairman: There were certain things in Mr. Ansell's speech of a somewhat personal nature. Personally, I indorse his views upon the general questions he has been discussing. I would ask the members of the Conference in their remarks not to go outside the proper subject which is before them—whether the basis of arrangement which is now proposed is a fair and reasonable way of settling this dispute.

Mr. Winter did not think it was necessary to draw out that discussion to any length. Every

member of the Conference had heard Mr. McLean. Speaking on behalf of the railway societies, he would like it to be understood, as far as not working with unionists was concerned, his society could not insist on it were they to pass any resolution on the subject. All the societies were wishing to enforce that rule, but that would not include the railway unions. He felt extremely sorry that an amicable arrangement had not been arrived at. He had hoped that they were gradually working towards a settlement, and he was exceedingly sorry when he heard that a settlement had been postponed. He believed that both sides had been deviating from the true issues before the Conference until neither one could help the other, capital going in one direction and labour in the other. The best thing now was to try and see the point where the parting took place. Any retrograde step would be bad for the prospect of settlement. If both sides would earnestly set themselves to discover where the actual point of separation was they would do good. The Conference proposed, in effect, that the labour unions shall be thrown open to all competent men. That was a concession. Would Mr. McLean and the company ask the labour unions to stultify themselves? But Mr. McLean told the Conference that the proposed basis of arrangement implied a compulsion upon the men to join the union. It was scarcely possible to interpret it in that light: it did not follow from what the basis of agreement contained. But all men and societies must be more or less restricted by their surroundings. Even if it were as Mr. McLean put it, it would be urging men for their good, and therefore a kindly act. If only some common standpoint could be found upon which the two sides could agree there was reason to believe that a settlement was even yet practicable. He (Mr. Winter) believed that public opinion would be favourable to the acceptance of the basis proposed. The continuance of an uncertain state of things would be sure to entail much suffering. It was to be hoped, therefore, Mr. McLean would not resolve to decline the proposals now made. From whatever point looked at, the present condition of the question between labour and capital was leading to deplorable results. He observed that the papers had quoted the expression "irresistible" used by him as if it had some extraordinary hidden meaning. It was never contemplated in the sense of any resistance being made to law or good order or the public peace. It was merely intended that the claims of unionism were so evident and so strong that they would in the end prevail in spite of opposition.

Hon. Mr. McLean: It is, perhaps, out of place for me to be here now. If all the speeches delivered were like the last one I could not complain. But I see it is evident we are likely to have a repetition of the attack on the Union Company. The first day all the attack was on the Union Company. Now we are going to have a repetition of that. I do not think it would be wise for me to remain. When an agreement is not come to on occasions such as this, the usual thing is to give a vote of thanks to the Chairman, and that terminates the discussion. After that you could have any further meeting among yourselves if you thought proper. However, I came here in good faith. If you wish me to stay for any particular object that may do good I will stay; or, if you wish, I will leave. You can then have a free debate. I shall be, in a sense, out of court. If this debate is to continue, I will withdraw after a few words. If it is not to continue, then I will propose a vote of thanks to the Chairman. The objection I have is that continual misrepresentations are being made about the company I represent. It is well known that objection was made to my coming here. The Union Company are going on with their business, and are not going to inquire as to whether men are union men or non-union men. I must again assert that we had no say in this dispute; our men were taken away from us. It may be said that the men we have are non-union men. Of course they are. But I again affirm that we never lifted a finger to hurt unionism. All this we hear about Chinamen being employed by us is a pure fabrication. We have plenty of men without having to employ Chinamen. I might perhaps tell you that two hundred Maoris were pressed on us very strongly for employment, but we declined to take them into our service. I am glad of the opportunity to refute this. All this talk about union men not being able to work with non-union men is absurd. Mr. Winter has just told us that in his society—which is one of the largest in New Zealand, and is also affiliated with the Maritime Council—they must, in the nature of things, work with non-unionists.

Mr. Boase did not think that Mr. McLean wished to crush the unions, but the position he had taken up would lead to that result. He knew that unions were formed for the purpose not only of keeping up the proper standard of wage, but for the purpose of organizing labour and skill for the benefit of the particular trade to which the members belonged. Those who had been paying for a considerable time into the union were fairly entitled to its benefit. How could they be said to be entitled to the benefit of a union who contributed nothing to its support? The *bona fide* contributors to a union would never consent to being placed on an equality with persons outside who paid nothing, and were probably not efficient workmen. A better lot of working-men could not be found anywhere than those who had been in the employment of the Union Company. They would all rejoice to go back, but they wanted to go back on honourable terms. They were willing to yield if the company would yield a little. Throughout the country it was admitted that whenever this matter was settled it could only be settled by some yielding on both sides.

Mr. F. C. Millar thought there was one point which must weigh with capitalists a good deal—they were all losing money; their business was going away from them. If they considered a little they would remember that it was through the workmen trained by the unions that they were able to turn out such good work. Being able to turn out good work, they succeeded in business, increased their plant, and extended their operations. Yet these were the very men who were now trying to crush unionism. Hence it was that the unions must now act in self-defence.

Mr. Seymour: Mr. McLean has told this Conference that he was pledged to these men now in his employment. He questioned whether there was a law which obliged a man or company to keep in their employment men who were incompetent to do the work for which they had been engaged. A report which he held in his hand stated that 1s. 1½d. was paid for what 7½d. was paid before the strike. This showed the new men were incompetent as compared with those men who had gone out.

According to ships' articles, if a man who was incompetent signed articles the master could reduce his wages. But he did not want the company to deal with the matter in that way. If they got their old hands back they would save the great difference which was shown by the above quotation. If the worst should come to the worst, and the union men had to seek employment elsewhere, the employers might rest assured that would be the means of building up unions of a strength which unions had never attained before. Some of the men had gone to the country, some had been thrown back on the towns. But all the trouble and suffering that might yet ensue would have been brought about by the company. Unions would become stronger; new men would take the place of the old hands; and those who had to go into the country would bring about unionism of a new type in the country districts. The Union Company might gain a victory now, but it would cost them dearly hereafter. A severer struggle than ever the present one was expected to reach would certainly take place in the future.

Mr. Dobson thought the position taken up by the unionists was unassailable by the capitalists. A union was an organization intended for the benefit of its members. What was the Union Company but a large organization existing for the benefit of those who contributed by taking shares? It was to be regretted that a satisfactory conclusion had not been come to. He believed the worst consequences of the struggle would be felt by the importers and employers of labour. They would yet see ruin staring them in the face through the way they were now treating the unions. If the delegates had refused to allow any margin for adjustment of differences *Mr. McLean* might have been justified in taking up the position he had assumed. If no settlement were to be made after all these delegates coming to try and settle the dispute a new movement would surely arise. The working-men were the wrong sort to be crushed; they might be compelled to retire from the struggle for a time, but they would persevere. They would not in the long-run submit to the dictation of employers in matters concerning the protection and preservation of their trade-rights. Non-union men should have no privileges for obtaining that which unionism had contributed its money to so freely. He would support the basis of settlement which had been read to *Mr. McLean*.

Mr. Lomas: I think if we talk for a week we shall not get nearer the point. I therefore think we must close this Conference. I am sorry we cannot get nearer to a settlement. If the men of the unions decline absolutely to work with non-union men the matter is done with. I think we ought to propose a vote of thanks to the Chairman. I shall therefore move a vote of thanks to the Chairman.

Hon. Mr. McLean: I shall second the motion. I am perfectly satisfied that *Mr. Fisher* has conducted the business of this meeting in an impartial manner. He has been a good Chairman. I think the thanks of the Conference are due to him. It is true he has not had much trouble to manage us, but he has shown much tact and judgment. I second the vote of thanks to the Chairman.

The Chairman: I am rather sorry I got into this position, for it has prevented me giving my views on the main question that has been discussed. I may be allowed to take this opportunity to say why the result of the Conference is as it is. I submit that the Union Company have not given way in the slightest respect. I think if any uninterested person were to go into the whole matter he would agree with those who say that the labour party have given way a good deal. It surely cannot be said that we have not understood the issue. Now, it has become a question whether you will have unions or not. I conceive that all the trades are now bound to come together and consider the position. When you find that the whole of the trades of the colony are forced into prolonging the struggle it is hard to see what is to be the outcome of it. Even yet I hope some means may be found to bring about a settlement, for I believe the struggle has now really begun. Many unionists have a foggy idea that they have been alienated. I will even still indulge in the hope that some basis of agreement will be arrived at, if not this one which we have been discussing.

Mr. Meyer: I would ask, as a matter of order, whether a report from this Conference, with evidence, should not be forwarded to the Government, and they would say whether they think the Conference should be closed, or whether some other basis of arrangement could not be found.

The Chairman: I shall willingly consult the Premier as to what steps we should take in the matter.

Hon. Mr. McLean: I have pressing engagements, and I hope you will not blame me if I am not present at your adjourned meeting. I have a great dislike to allow any uncertainty or doubt about the actual position.

Mr. Meyer: I was going to move the adjournment of this Conference until to-morrow. I have felt all along that it was a difficulty that only one company was represented here. I think the thanks of the Conference are due to *Mr. McLean* for the manner in which he has conducted this matter on behalf of his company. We cannot, of course, agree with his views. There has been nothing for the labour party to say; and, so far as the Trades and Labour Councils are concerned, they have had no opportunity of saying anything. If the delegates were to hold another meeting it might be found that the outcome of it would be more satisfactory.

Mr. J. A. Millar: In my opinion, so far as the Conference is concerned, it is closed. The delegates, of course, can meet if they wish, and if they wish to confer with employers they can do so.

At 12.30 p.m. the Conference adjourned until 10 a.m. next day.

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

a very delicate one so far as the Conference is concerned. The only satisfactory way of arriving at any decision would be by a deputation waiting on the Commissioners. I know there is a very strong feeling abroad in the country on this subject. It is felt that the Commissioners have laid themselves open to the charge of dismissing these railway servants for the purpose of disorganizing the Railway Servants' Association, and bringing the men to submission. But I am not prepared to make a definite statement to this Conference upon that subject. It is certainly a most unfortunate and singular coincidence that the men who have been dismissed are the men who have been taking a part in the conduct of those societies. I submit that the Commissioners should be asked to receive a deputation from this Conference on the subject. If they decline to receive such deputation we might consider what other course was proper to be adopted.

Mr. Meyer : I will second the resolution proposed by Mr. Sandford. It is due to every delegate of the Conference that this matter should receive attention from the public. I think the public already sees that unionism does not wish to go against the Government of the country, or take any power out of their hands. The trades are still willing to use their fullest endeavours to bring about an amicable settlement of this difficulty which has arisen ; but there is no disposition on their part to take any power into their own hands. Those who oppose the unions have shown that they are endeavouring to crush them. It behoves every person to bring what endeavour he can to urge the Commissioners to desist, or, if not, the Government to hold their hand.

Motion put and carried.

Mr. Winter proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Waldegrave, secretary to the Conference, and to the representatives of the Press.—Seconded by *Captain Highman*, and carried.

At 12 noon the Conference adjourned *sine die*.

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