between an injured workman and his former employer as there would be if the whole amount had to be taken from that employer's purse.

It certainly appears just as well as merciful that either employers themselves or employers jointly with the public should form such an accident insurance fund. The theory that the State (*i.e.*, the people generally, through the Government) should bear part of the burden is supported by the argument that industrial progress benefits every unit in the community, and therefore that compensation for an accident caused without any fault or negligence of an employer should fall in some proportion on the public. Whichever course the Government may adopt, if it sees its way to legislate, it is certain that neither on a maimed workman nor on the widow of one killed at his duty should fall the burden of the loss sustained in the industrial battle-field; the bill should be paid either by those who win direct industrial profits, by the people generally, or by a joint contribution.

Conciliation and Arbitration.

Even in States where efforts are being made to settle labour disputes by entirely voluntary conciliation and arbitration, the desirability and soundness of the principle of appealing to "sweet reasonableness" instead of to force commend it more and more to the favour of the commercial and artisan classes. Settlements are being made in controversies concerning work and wages which, if not thus concluded, would have caused long-standing dissatisfaction and acrimony between employers and employed, and which would have entailed untold suffering upon the weak and helpless. Strikes have had their day, and their useful day, for, barbaric weapons as they are, they have been hitherto the only arms with which the wage-earners could successfully prevent oppression, in the absence of any true knowledge of the real social position and their own power. Nor could arbitration take its rightful place till the time was ripe for its appearance—before a wider education had tilled the soil and made men ready to acknowledge reason as a guiding force instead of war; for the argument of war appears to predicate that to be the strongest (whether in money or in battalions) is to be divinely in the right.

Those, therefore, who believe in the high qualities of arbitration must settle in their own minds as to the mode in which such arbitration is to be carried into effect. In spite of the expense and sometimes failures of the different voluntary Conciliation and Arbitration Boards that have been set up in civilised countries, New Zealand has been the first, and is at present the only, country to institute Courts of compulsory arbitration. Disputes on labour matters, and controversies between those engaged in manufacturing or distributing the necessaries of life, are so wide-reaching in their effects, and they so directly affect the welfare of every citizen of the State, that not only does their settlement demand the expenditure of any reasonable amount of money and ability, but it requires that fullest publicity should be given to the transactions of the Boards and Court appointed to deal with such important affairs.

In New Zealand this last year has seen many cases brought before these tribunals, and with most satisfactory results. Threatened strikes have been averted, and friendly agreements arrived at, with a minimum of expense and loss to the several trades involved, and without anxiety or inconvenience to the general public. The principal of these were the following:—

The Consolidated Goldfields Company.—This was a dispute, commencing on the 30th May, 1896, between the company and the miners. The company had lowered the wages of its men from 10s. to 8s. 4d. a day. The miners held a meeting, discontinued work for three weeks, and then, forming themselves into an industrial union, referred their case to the Conciliation Board, they meanwhile returning to their work at 9s. a day while the case was *sub judice*. The Conciliation Board gave judgment for 9s. a day; but the decision was appealed from, and referred to the Arbitration Court. After a large amount of evidence had been taken the Judge gave his decision to the effect that the reduction of wages was premature, but that, looking to the large amount of money that was being expended by the Consolidated Goldfields Company in prospecting and opening up new ground (these being non-paying operations), the miners should consent to take a lower wage for a limited period, after which it should be permitted to reopen the whole question. The wages of the miners in the service of the company were therefore fixed at 9s. 6d. per diem up till the 30th June, 1897.

Westport Coal Company.—This company, some twelve months before, had made a reduction of 4d. per ton in the hewing-rate for coal. Afterwards another reduction of 3d. a ton was made, and those miners who would not accept it received notice of dismissal. The dispute was brought before the Conciliation Board; but the finding of the Board, both in regard to the hewing-rate and as to "freedom of contract," was not accepted by the company, which appealed. The Court of Arbitration inquired minutely into the case, and gave an award which contained no fewer than twenty clauses, settling the prices and conditions of different kinds of work. Most of these clauses are not of value (except as a standard) to men at work in other mines, because they fix rates, &c., for the mine in question only; but, as evidence was taken as to rates in other places, the cost of living, the demand for coal, &c., they undoubtedly are of great value. Moreover, two of these clauses, to a certain extent, affirm principles. One says, "If work is slack, and the men wish, the company is recommended to distribute the work among the men rather than discharge employés." Another prescribes, "That, as regards hewing coal, and trucking and tipping, so long as there are sufficient capable men at Denniston out of work, the company shall employ these, either by contract or day-labour, provided that they are willing to contract or work at reasonable rates, before the company calls for tenders from outsiders, or employs outsiders." These awards show the great advance made towards the solution of industrial difficulties, as they affect principles in the relation of employers and employed hitherto considered as being entirely within the domain of private judgment and "freedom of contract."

New Zealand Bootmakers' Association.—The difficulty between this association and the Christchurch Operative Bootmakers' Society arose through employers submitting certain printed conditions