

day. The employers had other things—the salerooms, for instance—to contend with. He challenged any one to say that during his thirty-three years in the business he had not always paid the highest wages in the trade. (Hear, hear.) Even Mr. Robinson would not deny that the furniture trade was in as good a position as it had ever been. If they restricted the employers in this way, then good-bye to cabinetmaking. It would simply open the door to cheap imported English furniture. The duty was at present $27\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and, if the cost of producing furniture locally was increased 25 per cent., it would pay to import English furniture.

In reply to the Chairman, Mr. Scoullar said he employed some piecework-men. Because there was an industrial union, they could not see why they should give the preference to its members instead of non-union men. They objected to that *in toto*.

Mr. Robinson, in reply to the proposal of the employers, said that his union could not agree with these as to the proportion of apprentices to men, but the question of apprentices' wages might be settled without any trouble. If this question was settled he thought the other questions would settle themselves.

Considerable discussion arose over the possibility of a log for piecework, and most of the union men were of the opinion that it was impossible in this trade; but Mr. Scoullar thought that a log could be drawn up that would give satisfaction to both masters and men. The difference in the woods would not be a difficulty. A witness had said that if a log was drawn up the men would be given gnarly wood to put into extension tables and other works. This was not right, as no master ever thought of putting such wood into tables, as it would warp.

Mr. Flockton gave evidence as follows: In his opinion indenturing boys was not advantageous either to master or apprentice. Indenturing apprentices was not general here, and there was no necessity for altering the custom. It was an antiquated custom that he did not at all approve of. As to the proportion of apprentices to men, every upholsterer should have a boy. After the first year it was necessary to put the boy up a step, and then another boy was needed to take his place and do the requisite preparatory work. If a boy was kept doing this preparatory work he would never learn his trade, and would naturally complain. In the cabinet trade he thought three boys to five men an absolute necessity. A boy was always needed in the French-polishing room, and, with perhaps four exceptions, there was not a shop in the town that employed more than one French-polisher; therefore he thought they should have a boy to every man, in order to keep up the supply. If there was only one boy to five men the boy would never learn his trade. A minimum wage of 10s. a day would be disastrous to the trade. It would tend to curtail trade by enhancing prices, would force half the cabinetmakers to close their shops, throw out of employment all old men and poor workers, lead to the importation of furniture, and an almost certain influx of Chinese labour. The profits at the present rate were too meagre to allow of such an increase. Men who could not earn the 10s. a day would be thrown on to the streets, and would have to work for the auction-rooms, and compete unduly with the trade. There would be no difficulty in forming a log to work piecework. He did not work piecework in his shop, but if a minimum wage was decided on it was necessary to work piecework, or else discharge all hands who could not earn that minimum wage. There was not much piecework done in Wellington.

The Board made the following recommendations: That the proportion of apprentices be not more than one to the first three men or fraction of the first three men. That the proportion be gauged by full employment for two-thirds of the year. (Mr. Wilkie objected to this award on the ground that it was contrary to the evidence adduced. The claim of the men was for one apprentice to five men, while the employers wanted three apprentices to five men.) This award applied to cabinetmakers, chair- and couch-makers, and polishers. With regard to upholsterers and mattress-makers, an extra boy is to be allowed as soon as the previous one has served two years of his term of apprenticeship. The claims of the men that no two apprentices should be taken on in any one year was struck out. The term of apprenticeship is to be five years. The terms of remuneration of apprentices were fixed as follows: First year, 6s. a week; second, 9s.; third, 12s.; fourth, 15s.; fifth, £1 per week. By consent, boys not engaged as apprentices not to count.

Regarding piecework, the men claimed that no piecework should be allowed in any shop. This was struck out, and the following reasons given: The Board does not deem it advisable to make any suggestion as to piecework. The evidence shows that at present there is very little piecework in the furniture trade in Wellington, and the Board is not justified in any interference with the present state of things, even were it advisable so to do under other circumstances.

As to the minimum wage (the men asked for 10s.), Mr. Quick proposed that it be 8s. per day. This was carried, and it was at this stage that Messrs. Fisher and Collins retired, remarking that it was no use their staying there any longer.

The question of giving preference to union men seeking employment, which was asked for by the union, was dealt with by a clause providing that employers in employing labour shall not discriminate against members of a union, and they shall not in the engagement or dismissal of their hands, or in the conduct of their business, do anything directly or indirectly that will operate to the injury of the union.

Finally, that an industrial agreement be drawn up embodying the above recommendations, to last at least one year, which may be prolonged by consent of the parties; such agreement to be signed by both parties within fourteen days, failing which the Board must report that it has been unable to bring about a settlement.

The Chairman of the Board obtained opinions from Judges Williams and Denniston upon the question of whether employers of non-union hands were affected by the decision of the Board in any dispute between a particular trade-union and the employers. The opinion of the Judges mentioned was that section 2 of the Act gave the Board jurisdiction to inquire into any dispute between an employer and his employés, even although the latter employed non-union hands. This decision did away with any doubt upon that point.