

95. You would not protect the girls in Christchurch from the rapacious employers in Auckland?—I have no information about that.

96. That is the question that I put to you?—Then I decline to answer it.

*Mr. Hardy:* As Mr. Tregear refuses to answer my question, Mr. Chairman, I will not ask him any more.

97. *Mr. Millar.*] Do you think it would be advantageous if the Arbitration Court had fixed sittings in the four centres, the same as the Supreme Court?—Yes; if it could be arranged it would be exceedingly useful, I think.

98. If a clause were put into the Bill to that effect the Court would have to arrange for fixed sittings?—Yes, I suppose it would.

99. *Mr. Laurensen.*] With regard to subsection (1) of clause 2 of the Bill before us, which reads, "Notwithstanding anything in the principal Act, all proceedings for enforcing any award (whether made before or after the commencement of this Act) shall, where the maximum penalty for the breach complained of does not exceed fifty pounds, be heard and determined by a Magistrate," &c., how would it do to amend the clause in this way: "Notwithstanding anything in the principal Act, the President of the Court shall have the power to refer any question of breach to a Magistrate for the purpose of taking evidence and reporting the finding on any question of fact"?—I think it would be valuable in some ways, but the matter of multiplying the sittings comes in. What we want to do is to try to simplify matters. If you have first to apply to the Arbitration Court, and the Court then refers the matter to a Stipendiary Magistrate, and the case is heard before him, and then there is an appeal to the Court again—why, there is endless litigation.

*Mr. Jolliffe:* I do not quite agree with Mr. Tregear as to the effect of that suggested amendment. I think that application should be made to the Arbitration Court in the first instance—not necessarily at a sitting. It might be made to the President, who would have the papers before him and would see that the case was one, say, in which a great deal of evidence would be required to be taken, and he might direct the Magistrate to take that evidence and report to the Court. Then the Court, having the finding of the Magistrate before it, could construe the award for itself and decide whether a breach had been committed, and if so inflict a penalty. I do not think there would be any circumlocution about it at all. It is a proceeding which is commonly taken by the Supreme Court where purely matters of fact have to be decided on. It can refer anything of that kind to either a skilled man or any lower Court. I think the suggestion made by Mr. Laurensen would have the effect of relieving the congestion more than the proposal in the Bill would.

100. *Mr. Millar* (to Mr. Tregear).] In view of the working of the Act during the past two years—practically since the abolition of the Conciliation Boards—do you think that the abolition has tended to improve the relations between employer and employee?—No, I do not.

101. Does it cost as much money under the existing condition as it did formerly, before the Conciliation Boards were superseded?—It costs more; the Court costs somewhat more now than it did before, but the expenses of both Court and Boards together were much more than they are now.

FRIDAY, 12TH AUGUST, 1904.

Deputation from New Zealand Employers' Federation in attendance. (No. 11.)

*The Chairman:* We hope, gentlemen, that we have not put you to any inconvenience, but since you were here previously a number of new clauses have been brought before the Committee, and these we thought it wise you should have an opportunity of giving evidence upon, if you so desired. I understand now that that is your wish, and we shall be glad to hear you.

*Mr. Field:* Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I would like to state at the outset that we are a deputation from the New Zealand Employers' Federation, and that in what we say this morning we are voicing the opinions of the employers of the colony. We wish to express our thanks to the Committee for the opportunity it has afforded us of speaking on these proposed new clauses. The employers appreciate very highly the courtesy of the Committee in not going forward with the new proposed amendments until the employers had had an opportunity of considering them and expressing their views thereon. And we wish especially to express our high appreciation of the courtesy and thoughtfulness of the Chairman in so kindly forwarding promptly to all the associations in New Zealand copies of the proposed amendments. These amendments and the letter sent by the Chairman were accompanied by a letter from myself, and in reply, out of the twelve associations which were communicated with by the Chairman, we have received answers from nine. The associations responding have met in the different parts of the colony—they represent the Provincial Districts of Auckland, Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, Wairarapa, Wellington, Canterbury, Otago, Southland, and Nelson—and we have sought, in our deputation this morning, to summarise and express the views of the employers thus forwarded to us, so that we may save needless duplication of evidence and avoid the trouble and expense of bringing our friends from different parts of the colony. Therefore, what we have to say this morning will, we hope, be received as voicing the actual views of the employers in the districts mentioned. With regard to the amendments proposed on the foolscap sheet: As we understand clause A, subsections (1), (2), and (3), it provides the method by which the Court shall notify parties if its sittings, and the method proposed is by newspaper advertisement, as determined upon by the President of the Arbitration Court. Well, Sir, our associations throughout the colony strongly object to that, if it is to be a substitute for the present method. The present method is by personal citation of each of the employers concerned. This clause, as we understand it, proposes to pass by that method of citing employers, and to substitute for it some announcement in the newspapers in the district. I need not dwell long on that particular section. I think all the members of the Committee will see what a strong probability there would be of hosts of employers never seeing the announce-