

25. I think there is a little mental confusion in your mind connected with this matter, but I will make a note of what you suggest?—In connection with this section 16 we make our old claim that section 101, subsection (c), of the Act be altered in so far as it prohibits costs being given against the Inspector. Section 21: The employers have taken up this stand: that, while they feel this will be a very difficult proposition to put into operation, and may result in some cases in the employers having to pay the fine out of their own pockets, and in other cases in hardship being inflicted on a worker through the brand of "striker" being put upon him, and consequent difficulty in his getting work from some employers, still, as it is admitted to be absolutely necessary that there should be some compelling force behind the Court's decisions, they must give their approval to the proposition. The Federation assents solely on the ground that, unless the employers thus assist, the fines in many cases will be quite unenforceable. The Federation gave a considerable amount of attention to this matter to find out if it were possible to make any suggestion to the Minister by which the fines could be made enforceable by some other means. We were quite unable to do so, and therefore give what, after all, must be admitted to be a qualified approval only of the proposal. Subsection (5) of section 21: We ask that the words "on demand" be inserted before the word "pay" in line 23. We think the employers, if they thus agree to assist the Government and the Department, have the right to ask that it should be the duty of the Department to go to the employer for payment of the amount he should so collect, and that it should not be made an offence, and that it should not be within the power of the Government or Department to make it an offence, if an employer forgot to pay the amount. Section 24: In this section, if a union is in default in connection with the amount of the judgment, members then are liable to the extent of £5 each. Now, the principle of the Bill right through has been to make the penalties not easier, but heavier. The present Act makes every member of a union liable to the extent of £10, and we fail to see why there should be any reduction in this case. Take the bakers' strike as an example: The very fact that the Minister decided to take action against the individual members instead of against the union, and the fact that these members are individually liable to the extent of £10, has, I think, at any rate, been an element in causing the strike to fizzle out as it has done; and to reduce the fine in a case of this sort would be simply making the work of the Minister and of the Department harder and less effective. We do not wish to be thought to be hard on the workers, or harder than necessary, and, seeing that we have agreed to the immensely increased penalties—or not raised objection to the immensely increased penalties proposed to be placed on the employers under this Bill—we cannot be accused of being harder on the workers than we agree to be ourselves in connection with the fines. We would also like to see provision made in this section giving power to the Government to attach the funds of a union immediately a strike has taken place. If the Minister had had that power in connection with the Blackball strike I venture to say there would have been no difficulty whatever in collecting the fine of £75.

26. *Hon. Mr. Millar.*] It was imposed by the Court in that case. I suppose the union would do the same as the Blackball men did?—What was that?

27. Divide their funds before they struck?—I understood it was after they struck.

28. They did, but other unions might withdraw their funds before they struck?—In many cases the strike takes place before they have time to do that sort of thing. At any rate, we make the suggestion with the idea of assisting the Department. Part III, Conciliation Councils: In connection with this Part of the Bill, the Federation is taking strong exception to the setting-up of Conciliation Councils. Set up as suggested they would simply perpetuate, if they did not aggravate, the position in which we find ourselves to-day in connection with the Conciliation Boards. The Federation suggests, as put forward by Mr. Booth, the appointment of conciliators, or Conciliation Commissioners, as they are termed in this proposal, to whom all disputes should be referred, and whose main duty it would be to endeavour to get the parties themselves to confer and come to a mutual agreement. I want to say that so long as we have the element of compulsion, and so long as we have the chairman in connection with this conference with a vote, so long shall we have failure in dealing with matters by conciliation; and having given a great deal of thought to the matter, and as one who is intensely desirous of arriving at something that will bring us, at any rate, a measure of industrial peace, I feel that if the Federation's suggestion were adopted it would go further in that direction than anything which has been proposed so far. I believe the public conscience is behind us in this matter, and would be glad indeed if the Committee could see its way to accept our proposal and give it a trial. Now, it might be said that if you appoint a chairman without a vote and with assessors representing each side you would get out of the difficulty. I am positive, however, you will not get out of it in that way, because, as I have already said, so soon as you do so you destroy the true spirit of conciliation. Immediately the Government appoints these people you will have the employer's representative on the one side and the worker's representative on the other battling for all they can get. You will have no spirit of conciliation unless the parties are invited to meet and to try and come to an agreement. The result of an invitation of that sort would be that a considerable number from either side or both sides would gather at the invitation of the Commissioner, supposing one were appointed. In answer to that possible objection, and speaking as the result of experience, I say, let them come so long as you have the right man as Industrial Commissioner, and let them have a go and blow off steam, and I believe that will be one of the biggest elements in arriving at a final solution and agreement. If the chairman so appointed is worth his salt at all, the result of this blowing-off of steam will be that he will find out what are the non-essentials, at any rate, in the dispute, and they could be disposed of. He will find out what are the more important points upon which there is the greatest variance on one side or the other, and at a certain stage in the conference, by the exercise of a little tact and diplomacy, he would get the parties in most cases, if not in every case,