

22. The revolutions of all the other wheels depend upon the revolutions he makes?—That is so, and he is the only one who receives consideration at the hands of his employer. We feel it would be impossible to make provision for an exertion wage without doing grave injustice to the majority of men. It would mean that one would get an exertion wage while an injustice was being done to twenty.

23. It has been alleged before the Committee by more than one witness that the efficiency of workmen of late years has distinctly decreased—that the return they make in labour for their wages is far less; in other words, that labour has become much dearer to the employer?—That is a very hard statement to disprove. But I know that in two instances it was disproved in a case I took in Invercargill last week. One was in connection with a man who got £13 a month six or eight years ago; he is getting £12 or £13 a month to-day. Six or seven years ago he had only to do the tallying in the yard; now he does the stacking and loading in addition.

24. He does more work for the same money?—Yes.

25. That is only an individual instance: can you tell me anything of a general nature? Do men go about their work as readily and cheerfully and work as freely as they did a dozen years or fifteen years ago? Do they count their minutes in a begrudging style, as if they were afraid to lay one brick extra in a given time?—I have never known it to exist. I have worked for employers who were not men you could work cheerfully for.

26. Men who wanted the utmost maximum?—Yes, and they had a most disagreeable way of getting it. And I have worked for employers for whom it was a pleasure to work; and I do not think it could be stated with truth that we do not do our fair share of work. Some years ago, when I was working in the timber industry, we thought it was an extraordinary tally for a man to turn out 8,000 ft. of timber a day—that was 1,000 ft. an hour. Later on men turned out 10,000 ft. a day for a month. I took the tally myself, and the average was 10,000 ft. a day for the nineteen days that the mill worked. There is a practice of playing off one mill against another, and if one mill turned out a large quantity another would try to beat it. We heard of one man turning out 16,000 ft., and that record stood for a considerable time, but eventually we had a benchman who turned out 22,000 ft., and when the case was being heard in Invercargill last week we had the extraordinary story of a benchman on the West Coast turning out 28,000 ft.

27. Is the general average about 8,000 ft. a day?—The average per day is very much in excess of what it was many years ago.

28. Is that attributable to better mechanical methods?—To some extent. It is also attributable to men becoming ambitious, not so much for monetary gain, but because they have pride in their work and try to excel others.

29. This goes to rebut the statement as to the decrease in efficiency of the workmen?—So far as the industry of which I have most experience is concerned.

30. That involves considerable skill, and strength as well?—Yes. I take it that the Committee has seen the recommendations of the Trades and Labour Council with regard to the representatives on the Arbitration Court.

31. Yes, all those matters of detail we have gone fully into?—With regard to the recovery of back wages, we agreed that if a man accepted less than the award he was not entitled to more than three months' deficiency if he sued. We have no sympathy with a man who goes to work for less than the award rate of wages, and we think this would be a deterrent to some extent. We also disapprove of getting the Labour Department to fix the under-rate permits. The impression that most people have is that the unions strongly object to them; but they only object when the under-rate permits are given to men who are not properly entitled to them.

32. Did you hear the evidence of Mr. Powell with regard to the swamping of his trade by this system?—Yes. I think we have only refused two permits, while we have given a large number. We object to permits being granted in times of depression, when there is a lot of surplus labour on the market, to men who are not old men nor physically incapable.

33. You think they should be confined to men whose major occupation has been in the trade?—Yes.

34. Is there any improvement in the proposal to put the system under the control of the Labour Department?—Certainly not. The Trades Council Conference suggests the appointment of a committee from both sides. But our objection to the Labour Department dealing with the system is that the Department is inclined to go along the lines of least resistance.

35. In other words, the Labour Department has to be goaded a good deal before it will do much?—We find it difficult to get the Labour Department to do much for us. What we fear is that the Labour Department is somewhat under the influence of the Minister, and it does not follow that it will always have a labour Minister in authority. We have at present a Minister who is a labour man, but it does not follow that he will be there always; and if the position were held by a man not in sympathy with labour his views would be reflected by the Department. There might come a time when the Labour Department would be issuing permits indiscriminately. What I have referred to are the most vital points, which we feel most strongly about.

36. *Mr. Arnold.*] With regard to the Conciliation Boards, you say that these Boards have never had a fair chance?—That is so. Taking my own experience before the Wellington Board, we find that they do not take evidence and go into the matter in the same way as the Court does. They sit round the table and discuss matters and ascertain from each side what their views are. If the parties fail to arrive at an agreement on any point the members of the Board endeavour to bring them together as far as possible, and, after having allowed both sides to thresh the matter out carefully, they then come to a decision on the points not agreed upon.

37. They always had a chance of doing that, had they not?—Yes, until the Employers' Association propounded the policy of ignoring the Board altogether, and from that time onward the local Board had to subpoena the employers before they would appear.