

spective it would mean the wiping out of sixty-two unions. And it is often very difficult to get seven members at the start. We know how extremely difficult it is to get a union formed in any new industry. Then, again, I take it that we expect, after the alterations made in the tariff last session, New Zealand will become the home of very many more industries as time goes on which will be in their infancy, and under this Act the workers engaged would not be able to start a union until they were twenty-five strong. This clause would prevent the unionist movement going ahead if the number required to form a union were increased to the proposed twenty-five. We are not much concerned about the employers, but we do not wish to see the number altered in their case either. They can form an association of two if they like. The membership of seven for a workers' union has worked very satisfactorily in the past, and we think it should be retained. With regard to the members of the Court, I am of the same opinion as Mr. Whiting, that they should be elected on a democratic basis—that is to say, that an absolute majority should elect them. We hope the amending Bill will, if passed, have that provision in it. Sections 49, 50, 51, and 52 we agree with. With reference to section 53, dealing with permits, the case that Mr. Whiting quoted I was personally connected with. The facts are these: There was a man in Dunedin who had given valuable evidence before the Arbitration Court, where we got the magnificent wage of £2 a week awarded. When he went back to work his employer told him he was not worth £2 a week. He wrote up to me and asked me if I could get him work. My employer called me down—I was a member of the Permit Board—and asked me what sort of a Permit Board we had down in Dunedin. I told him I would make inquiries about the case. The man was asked to apply for a permit to work for £1 10s. a week. He applied for a permit, and the Permit Board met and refused to grant it. They called evidence from the men whom he worked with, and the employer said he would not give him more than £1 10s., but I got him work in Christchurch at the minimum and over the minimum wage. That is the only case where such an attempt was made, and that was ineffective. I think a record like that of seven or eight years, since we have had the clause, is *prima facie* evidence that the award has worked in a manner calculated to do good both to the employer and to the men. It will be patent to some—it is certainly patent to me as a member of a Permit Board—that we must have some check on employers who strive to take advantage in obtaining men to work under the permit wage. We have had to refuse permits to some, and employers have worked with us in refusing permits where an employer was going to get an advantage over other employers. We think that to give the power into the hands of an Inspector would be to place him in a false position. If he happened to be a man of fair mind it would be difficult to get him to do justice, because he would allow sentimental considerations to sway him. For a man to apply for a permit is a sign of degeneracy, arising either from old age or ill health. It is a system which has to be safeguarded in a very careful manner. We have men engaged on these boards who are imbued with a strong sense of justice, and if a man is deserving of a permit he cannot do harm to anybody in the trade, because it is only a matter of a year or two. The employers want young men who are highly skilled nowadays.

9. Is it necessary when a permit is given on the ground of old age to issue it for six months only?—It is renewed as a matter of form. There are two men in Christchurch who get their permits purely as a matter of form; they are simply sent round by the Chairman as the old permit expires. We agree to section 54. If the Minister's explanation of section 55 is right I have no hesitation in saying that that is what we all desire—that is, that no mere informality should invalidate the proceedings. Section 56 we agree to. With regard to section 57—the “needs wage”—of course, we understand it is optional on the part of any persons to adopt this, but we are satisfied that a needs wage is no more going to cure the evils which the workers complain of than the Arbitration Act. We are strongly opposed to anything being put in the Bill giving us all the evils of sweating for the advantage of higher wages to men in the highest form for a few years, who will then be left practically physical wrecks. We know what has happened in America and England. In my own trade, in England, it has been necessary to prevent this thing by getting a log under which a man shall not do more than a certain amount of work for a certain amount of pay. The only effect of such a system would be to make a man old before his time. We do not think that an academic question of this sort should be imported into a Bill when the whole practice of life goes to condemn the thing as calculated to do no good to the nation at large at all. The policy of bustle is no good at all to a country, and we do not want to do anything which will bring it about. We think that forty-four hours a week is fast becoming the recognised hours of work in a large number of industries, and if it was placed on the statute-book that the minimum wage was to be 1s. 1½d. per hour it would solve the labour question for a long time to come. The Arbitration Court should be prevented from saying that men, when old, should get from 7d. to 10d. an hour, because we think it is a crying shame. The Trades Conference for years asked for a minimum wage to be fixed, and it has not been given, but the need for it has come now. We also think that if a man refuses to join a union, from conscientious scruples, or from any other scruples, he should pay 6d. into the union funds for the benefits obtained by him through the efforts of men who pay their 6d. a week. We also ask to be inserted in the Bill a clause giving us unconditional preference. I might say that in our award we have unconditional preference, and we give unconditional preference. If a man in any industry will not join the union from conscientious scruples, let him pay 3d. or 6d. a week, as the case may be, for the benefit of those who have got improved conditions for him to work under.

10. *Hon. Mr. Millar.*] That was in the Bill of last year, but those who represented the unions said they would not have it?—We want them to come voluntarily into the union, but we want them to pay their 6d. if they will not.

*Mr. Whiting:* Our union has been agitating for unconditional preference for some considerable time. We do not want the men's money, but we say that when we go to the expense