

9. And therefore you are voicing the opinions of the Conference, of which you were a member, on behalf of these three unions?—Yes, that is so. The unions have considered this Bill.

10. Well, go on, Mr. Hickey?—So far as the evidence goes that the other two witnesses have given, I cannot go very much further into the matter; but there is one point I would like to mention, and that is regarding the First Part of the Bill. What we workers maintain is that we should have the right as a last resort in each case to withdraw our labour if we think it necessary. Men have a right to take up a stand by withholding their labour in a case of victimisation, which is the most difficult charge to sheet home to an employer. Employers have so many reasons to offer for dismissing a man, and in a Court of law or arbitration it is almost impossible to prove that the manager, or mine-owner, or employer, as the case may be, was actuated by a spirit of hostility, and for that reason we find it impossible to protect our fellow-workers except by the combined efforts of the men themselves. Further, we say that in the event of the Court not thoroughly understanding the position, and reducing wages to a starvation level, the workers should maintain their right to sell their labour to the highest bidder.

11. Would this Bill prevent them from exercising that right?—Decidedly. It would not prevent them if they were not afraid of three months' imprisonment.

12. If the employers say they cannot or will not give anything over a living-wage, how does that prevent the man selling his labour to the highest bidder?—I said, if the Arbitration Court fixes the wage.

13. You assume that the employers would give a higher wage?—I assumed that they were in a position to give more. Take, for instance, the mining industry, which is a most peculiar industry for a layman to understand, and the Court makes some extraordinary blunders in such cases. The employers and the employees have to come together and fix up some of the particular points. In such cases if the Court fixes a wage which is not a living-wage we maintain we have the right to sell our labour at a price above. In connection with the Conciliation Boards, we contend that they have never had a fair trial. They have been limited in their power, with the result that both sides have refused to abide by their decisions. I would like to say a word or two with regard to Part IV, regarding the exertion wage—clause 57. Before a needs wage or an exertion wage could be determined upon it would be necessary for the employer to fix a standard output, and anything over the standard output would be paid for at certain rates to be fixed. The difficulty at once arises in fixing the standard output of an article. It is impossible in many industries to do so, and the whole thing is contrary to the spirit of unionism. As Mr. Thorn states, the whole of the unions of the Dominion are unanimous in opposing this clause.

14. *Hon. Mr. Millar.*] That statement should not be allowed to go forth. The unions of the Dominion are not unanimous in opposing it?—I will say, practically the whole of the unions. I may say they have had a taste of this exertion wage in operation at Millerton, where miners are paid 1s. 11d. per ton for filling loose coal, and where the company pay wages-men 10s. 6d. per day to fill coal, and by offering them 8d. per ton for all coal filled above a certain set amount they speed the men up to an abnormal rate.

15. *The Chairman.*] Similar to the system at Messrs. Booth and Macdonald's, in Christchurch?—Practically the same thing, but in a more exaggerated form. I think that is about all I have to say, as the whole thing has been very well dealt with by other witnesses.

PATRICK HICKEY re-examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] You have heard what has been said by Mr. Jackson: have you anything to add?—Unfortunately, I came into the room in time to hear only the latter portion of what he said.

2. When before the Committee the other day you supported the evidence given by Mr. Thorn?—Yes.

3. That evidence was to the effect that the present machinery in the Arbitration Act for the enforcement of fines was sufficient for the purpose, was it not?—That was the conclusion Mr. Thorn came to.

4. And it deprecated all the provisions of Part I of the present Bill, for the prevention of strikes?—Yes.

5. Do you support him in that?—Yes.

6. There is another point which Mr. Thorn raised about the permit question. He spoke of the continued applications for permits, and disapproved of power being given to inspectors to issue permits. He urged the setting-up of a small Board, composed of two representatives from each side, who should determine whether permits should issue or not. Have you had any experience with regard to permits?—No, I have not.

7. It does not apply to any extent in the mining industry?—No, I do not think so.

8. Has there been any proposal on the West Coast for classifying workers?—Not that I am aware of.

9. You spoke strongly with regard to victimisation: have you any suggestion to make to the Committee which could help it in framing any clauses to prevent it?—No, I have none at all. It is one of those things which are pretty hard to prevent, because an employer can elude it by giving other reasons.

10. Do you think that strikes can be justified in exceptional cases?—Yes.

11. Suppose an employer, in a fit of resentment, dismissed every official of a union in his employ, would that justify an immediate strike on the part of the others?—Yes.

12. What remedy is provided in the existing law for settling or preventing a strike of that kind?—The usual remedy, I presume, is the fines that are inflicted. That is all that I know of.

13. Has any case been successfully carried out in which a fine has been inflicted for victimisation?—There may have been at some time during the operation of the Act. I could not say.