

163. Now, owing to the increased price of our products, such as butter, flax, and cheese, is it not a fact that every one has been rushing to get hold of some land?—That is the result of speculation.

164. Owing to the increased price of land everything has gone up in proportion, and if you had not got the Arbitration Act would not exactly the same thing have taken place?—I maintain that the wages must have gone up, otherwise the people would have died of starvation. If the industries had not been governed by Arbitration Court awards wages would have gone up.

165. Do you think those engaged in unskilled labour would have improved their conditions?—I think so. They would have organized themselves. They organize in other countries.

166. The organization in some other countries has been so ineffective that they have had to be taken into other associations: the trend is towards federation of all trades?—Capital was isolated at one time, but now the capitalists have combined, and labour likewise.

167. Do you know that the amount paid by factories in wages has increased by a million and a quarter?—I dare say that is so, but naturally this would have come about irrespective of the Arbitration Act.

168. Then, you are of opinion that if the Arbitration Act were repealed the unions would remain as they are now?—The workers would get a bare existence, as they do now.

169. If men are getting £3 14s. a week as compared with others on the wharves getting £1 10s. as an average now, would you say the whole of the workers are only getting a bare existence?—You pick an isolated case where miners are getting exceptionally good work, which they cavilled for.

170. Five pounds a week must be more than an existence wage if the majority of the workers are getting a great deal less than that?—The way some of these people live is by denying themselves necessities.

171. *Mr. Alison.*] You say that the workers of New Zealand are only receiving a bare living—a “bare existence,” I think, the words were?—Yes.

172. What, in your opinion, is a fair and reasonable wage in coal-mining, the line of business you follow?—You could not fix a fair and reasonable wage. You must remember I am a Socialist.

173. *Hon. Mr. Millar.*] You do not believe in the wage system at all?—No. That is the reason I am opposed to contracts.

174. *Mr. Alison.*] There is no way of fixing a fair and reasonable wage?—There is no such thing as a fair and reasonable wage.

175. How, then, would you determine the amount of remuneration between the employer and the worker?—I contend that so long as there are employers and employees there can be no such thing as a fair and reasonable wage.

176. You consider that the State alone should control the whole of the industries of the Dominion?—Yes, a socialised State.

177. With reference to the cancellation of its registration when a union strikes, you consider that an employer affected by the award should continue to be bound by the award?—I think there is something to that effect in existence in Canada: the moment that a union strikes it should be outside the jurisdiction of the award.

178. And should include the employer?—Yes, the whole thing should be settled outside the Court. I contend you cannot prevent strikes by repressive legislation.

THOMAS LONG examined. (No. 6.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Whom do you represent?—The Trades and Labour Council Conference. With respect to Part I of this Bill, the Conference is of opinion that those who have brought it down have lost sight of the fact that the original legislation was introduced with the view of fostering the formation of trades-unions. This matter was fully discussed at the Conference, which was of opinion that Part I would not foster trade-unionism, but, as a matter of fact, would lead to a majority of the unions cancelling their registration.

2. Do you approve of the evidence which has been given by Mr. Thorn?—Yes, I do, in its entirety.

3. And that of the other witnesses?—Yes.

4. Is there anything you would like to add to their evidence without going seriatim through all the sections of the Bill?—I did not intend to do that. Neither of the previous witnesses touched upon the matter of fines and penalties inflicted upon persons who express sympathy with the strikers. The Conference condemned that proposal very strongly, and considered it was an infringement on the liberty of the subject.

5. You refer to section 6 of Part I?—Yes.

6. The Conference would not have the fount of Christian charity dried up?—That is so. The Conference also strongly protested against the manner in which it is proposed to collect the fines. We considered it is asking the employer to take up a most peculiar position in acting the part of a bailiff on behalf of the Government to collect the fines. Opinions were expressed at the Conference that this was a matter which had really been fought out in the older countries many years ago. It was, and always has been, and I hope always will be so, in so far as any employer having the right to deduct anything further than what is implied in the Wages Attachment Act, which we consider fully meets the position. So far as lockouts are concerned, we had some experience in Auckland a few years ago in the furniture trade. No doubt the Minister of Labour remembers that. It was a matter of impossibility to sheet the charge home to the employers when the case was taken to the Court. As far as clause 49 is concerned, I also approve in its entirety of the decision arrived at by the Conference in respect to this. We have had a great deal of trouble and difficulty in getting this thing settled. I know that some of the employers—I am speaking