

unionists thought made provision for Dominion awards, but when a case was brought by the New Zealand Bakers and Pastrycooks' Union it was found impossible, owing to the wording of the Act, for a Dominion award to be made. The judgment was given in Wellington by Mr. Justice Sim, and since then we have had to go all over the country to get awards. I think it was submitted by Mr. Justice Sim that if a Dominion Clerk of Awards were appointed there would then be authority to deal with Dominion awards, where there is at present no authority provided for by Act to undertake that work. We are also supporting the other clauses of the Bill, but Mr. Kennedy will give evidence in regard to them.

3. How will the existence of your thirteen unions operate under the Bill in the matter of trifling disputes from one end of the Dominion to the other: would it not affect the whole industry throughout New Zealand?—Yes, but practically every trade has a conference every two years, or yearly. The awards are generally for two years or three years. Prior to such a conference each union would instruct its representatives as to what our claims would contain. Then the national executive would act for the whole of the unions throughout the country.

4. But notwithstanding all the conditions of the agreements you enter into, are there not certain disturbing influences that are seen at times—it may be in one centre, and it may be in another?—That is what we want to avoid.

5. With all the machinery you may build up, if there is a disturbance in one part of the Dominion, would it not disturb the whole industry in every part of the Dominion?—Not necessarily. That would be a branch, and that branch would have to submit to authority. Suppose, for example, the disturbance was in Auckland: there would be twelve other branches against Auckland, and Auckland would have to be brought into line.

6. You would be introducing a condition that has not operated on every occasion up to the present time?—In every other country there is what we ask. Take the United States of America: as far as painters are concerned they have one brotherhood of painters, which includes Canada as well as the United States. They have not branches, but what they call "locals." There are 1,290 locals of painters in the United States and Canada, and they are all under one head.

7. *Mr. Howard.*] Have not the engineers of New Zealand one union now—the Amalgamated Society of Engineers?—Yes.

8. So it is not a new idea of the painters?—No.

9. *The Chairman.*] What merit is there in the proposal for a Dominion Clerk of Awards?—Well, at present it is impossible for any trade to get a Dominion award. What happens is that you get what are called uniform awards, but it takes nearly twelve months, sometimes, for the Court to go right through New Zealand. Take the cases now in hand in Wellington. It is five months since the Court sat last in Wellington. Disputes which were just too late for the last sitting of the Court in February have had to wait over till now.

10. How are you to provide for a Dominion award, with varying costs of rent and living?—At the present time you do not get it. The Court will not give it. But the Court makes an order that the increase shall be so-much, and it applies right throughout. I and other workers have submitted to the Court that in Wellington the workers are entitled to at least 5s. a week more than those in other centres of New Zealand on the rents alone, but the Judge told me only last Monday that the Court is making this matter uniform. It applies irrespective of what the rises are in the various localities.

11. But notwithstanding the varying cost of living, you are prepared to accept one union, one award, and one rate of pay?—Yes.

12. That is not borne out in connection with the tramways dispute. We had to build up three schedules, "A," "B," and "C," so that you could have varying rates for each centre, on account of the differences in the cost of living, the rent particularly?—They may not desire one union: we do.

13. *Hon. Sir W. H. Herries.*] Does this mean that they are going to pool the funds of the different branches?—No. In the proposal which was discussed at our two or three conferences it was agreed that the local unions should have the control of their own finances. They would contribute a certain amount *per capita* towards the expenses of the central office, but each union would have the entire control of its own funds.

14. So that if one branch had a good "nest-egg," it would not be "collared"?—That would not be possible. Some of the unions which have a few pounds would not agree to part with them for the purposes of a central office.

15. If there were a strike in Auckland, over, say, the interpretation of an award, would that mean, in case there was one union, that there would be a general strike?—No. At present a branch can strike. We want to prevent them from striking. They would have to obey instructions from the national office, and no national office would want a section out here and a section somewhere else. They would not start a thing like that. They would not, because a dispute occurred in Auckland or Wellington, pull all their men out, all over the country.

16. *Mr. Sullivan.*] It would introduce more discipline?—Yes.

17. *Mr. Howard.*] I would like to get at the underlying principle you are dealing with. At the present time are not the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters one union, and the engineers one union?—Yes.

18. So that your object really is economy as between the Court and the workers in the settlement of disputes?—Yes, and in the general organizing-work of the unions. If we had one union we would have an organizer attending to our business, whereas now we have part-time organizers—men working at their trade and attending to our business at the same time.

19. The Shearers' Union are really one union, only operating under the Court as a number of unions?—Yes.

20. You are really trying to legalize a position which is already established?—Yes.

21. *Mr. Sullivan.*] What is the position of the freezing workers: are they not in exactly the same position as the shearers?—Yes, as far as their own industry is concerned.

22. And have not the bootmakers a Dominion award?—A uniform award.

23. In their special case is there not something in their registration which has enabled them to get a Dominion award?—I understand that you cannot get a Dominion award. I am going entirely upon Mr. Justice Sim's decision. The bootmakers would have the same registration as any other organization.