

(2) The possibility of fixing a standard wage above this minimum, on the principle of "capacity to pay," should be examined. The standard wage should vary in accordance with an objective standard, the principle of determination for which should be decided after thorough examination by an expert committee. Such an objective standard need not be the same for all industries.

(3) The desirability of fixing the wage rate, whether standard or minimum, at more frequent intervals than at present should be discussed by the conference.

(4) In view of variations in conditions from locality to locality and from industry to industry, and of special circumstances requiring special treatment, it is desirable to investigate the practicability of making provision for special conditions, having due regard for the necessary safeguards against exploitation of groups weak in bargaining-power. I threw out as a suggestion for consideration the possibility of providing for such agreements of a special nature between representatives of unions of employers and employees, the agreements to have the force of an award by process of registration. By way of example I quote one instance which I understand occurred recently. Employers and employees in a particular firm agreed to close down on Saturday, making up the time lost during the week. After the plan had operated for some time it was found to be in contravention of the existing award, and had to be discontinued. Where a reasonable majority of workers and employers were agreeable, there seems no reason why agreements of this sort, duly registered by the official representatives of both sides, should not become operative without further formalities.

There may be objections to a policy of this sort, obvious to those engaged in industry and not apparent to an outside observer; but the suggestion seems to me to be worthy of trial within limits.

(5) It seems to me desirable that alternative methods of collective bargaining should be provided where the majority of workers and employers in a district desire it. Trade Boards along the lines of those developed in the United Kingdom should be set up as an alternative to compulsory arbitration in particular industries. The desirability of setting up minimum-wage boards in Agriculture should be considered. It seems to me better to try out alternative methods with the Court still in being rather than to abolish the Court and replace it by methods which may prove a failure, or rather than wait for "something to turn up" to replace it, after the style of Mr. Micawber.

(6) In reference to the personnel of the Court, I feel that much good would follow from the appointment of a highly qualified economist as research officer to keep the Court familiar with events abroad, and conduct investigations into special problems; and clearly associated with the Council of Industrial and Scientific Research.

(7) Where third parties are intimately concerned in any award—as, for example, farmers in a dispute affecting an industry producing farming products, they should be given every facility to present evidence as to how a given award is likely to affect them.

(8) It would be advantageous to set up a Joint Industrial Council for New Zealand, and possibly Joint Industrial District Councils to act as general advisory and investigational bodies. The national body might work in close conjunction with the Council of Industrial and Scientific Research.

SUPPLEMENTARY MEMORANDA.

(1) "The Economic Position of the Farmer in New Zealand," by Professor H. Belshaw.

(2) "Unemployment in New Zealand," by the Research Committee of the Auckland Branch of the Economic Society of Australia and New Zealand.

(3) "Recommendations relating to Education and Vocational Selection and Guidance," by the Executive Committee of a conference of representative employers, employees, and educationalists held recently in Auckland.

[I wish to thank my assistant, Mr. H. R. Rodwell, M.A., for correcting the proofs of this and accompanying memoranda, and for undertaking many extra duties, which enabled me to prepare the accompanying material and attend the Conference.] (*Applause.*)

Discussion of Papers.

The Chairman: The papers by Professors Murphy, Fisher, Tocker, and Belshaw are now before the Conference for discussion. Members will note that speakers are allowed five minutes only, and can only speak once.

Hon. Mr. Weston: Sir, I think we must all admit that the papers we have listened to to-day are very valuable contributions to the work of this Conference, and that if this Conference results in nothing else, the production and reading of these papers has probably justified its existence. Of course, all the appreciations of the position will not meet with the unanimous approval of us all; nor will we probably agree with the conclusions of these papers in their entirety. The fact that to some extent the points of view of the four men differ—in some respects materially—shows how difficult it is to arrive at unanimity on a question so far-reaching and important as the present one. I must say that sometimes in reading the appreciations of experts—and I think the same observation applies to our own efforts in that direction—when I come to consider them and endeavour to sort them out and weigh their effect, I am reminded of a method of playing poker, with which no doubt every one of us is familiar. I mean the game of poker in which twos have the value of any card that the holder likes to put upon them. So, often in an argument one finds that the whole depends upon the strength and weight given to a particular point or factor. And I suggest that when we come to weigh and consider these papers, which it is impossible to do at a moment's notice—one has to go through them most carefully and study them closely—we must take care that we do not fall into that error ourselves. Do not let us discard that which tells against us, and exaggerate those points which are in our favour. It is just as well never to underestimate the weight of an argument that is against you. If I may venture to make any suggestions in regard to the conditions which this country finds itself in at the