

*Mr. Turner* : I would like to associate myself with the praise which has been bestowed on the Professors of Economics for their papers, and to commend in a way the suggestion made by our friends opposite that it might be advisable, in view of the difficult nature of the papers, to put the professors into a room by themselves and let them fight it out. Possibly the result might be the same as with the Kilkenny cats, which fought one another until only their tails were left. I do not want to ask Professor Murphy any questions, because I find myself very much in agreement with what he said, and also because we did not have his paper before us. Neither am I going to criticize Professor Tocker, because he has not been given a promise to have five minutes taken off each of his colleagues' time to make his reply in half an hour, which would be the only way possible to enable all the questions raised to be dealt with. I would want at least half an hour to deal with the subject, and especially to offer the very best general criticism with regard to Professor Belshaw's very weighty paper. Professor Belshaw has made a very minute study of the whole subject of industry and commerce in this country. He has gone over those subjects most minutely with a microscope; he has examined every possible feature connected therewith; but I do suggest that what he wanted was a telescope and not a microscope. It seems to me that, while he has been looking on little things like the daisies in one corner of the country, he has entirely overlooked the main features of the country, the mountains and the precipices. That is not a rhetorical statement. What I want to call attention to particularly is the statement on page 48, where I find that he refers to the regulations that hamper industry. In fact, in the whole seventeen pages he only devotes seven lines to the question of the regulations. One of the most serious difficulties that we employers find at the present time is the number of regulations we are faced with which hamper industry, and that aspect requires more consideration than Professor Belshaw has given it. We have need for such a statement in carrying out the objective of this Conference, which is, I understand, to examine the present arbitration system with a view to discovering what defects there are in it, and to suggest possible remedies. As I understand the objective of this gathering, I suggest that Professor Belshaw would have been better advised to have limited his paper to that particular point. I would like to ask Professors Belshaw and Tocker what suggestions they have to offer of a practical kind to get rid of the present very rigid system and to substitute more flexibility. On page 24 Professor Tocker states that it is probably desirable that the system should be revised, but I do not think he makes any suggestion as to how that should be done; while Professor Fisher, on page 19, says it is no doubt desirable that wage-rates should be a little more elastic. Both professors desire a little more flexibility, which is the great point the employers will notice also; but neither professor seems to make any practical suggestion in that connection. I would also call attention to a further suggestion in Professor Fisher's paper, where he makes this statement: "From a different point of view the fact that strikes seldom inflict nearly as much harm as is commonly supposed is perhaps one reason why it is often rather foolish to engage in them." I really wonder whether he carefully considered that opinion before he committed it to writing, or whether it just slipped into the paper. Has he consulted any particular industry? Has he consulted any farmer, or any representative of the freezing industry? Because, if he did so, I would suggest that he would find that the effect of strikes has been to do a great deal more harm than the public realize. Another statement that Professor Fisher makes is that people who are not doing work equal in value to the wages they receive will soon lose their jobs. I would like to know whether he has discussed that feature of the question with business men. Finally, I would ask Professor Belshaw regarding the figures he produced as to the strikes in other countries, and the number of days lost, why does he not obtain a little more recent information and compare the position in Canada, where there is voluntary conciliation and arbitration, and in South Africa, with the position in New Zealand? I think his figures are out of date, and I ask if the professor has available any further figures.

*Mr. Cook* : There is one matter dealt with by Professor Tocker which I would like him to explain more fully in his reply. He states on page 25 of his paper, "To secure greater productivity and greater efficiency employers must be left much freer to organize production in their own way. In particular the greatest flexibility in the matter of arranging jobs is essential." I would like the professor to explain exactly what he means by that statement. Does he mean that it should be left to the employers to impose upon the workers any conditions which they might think fit to do? I confess I am completely in ignorance as to the meaning of the statement. I do not profess to know much about the economic situation, but I do know something about other problems that we are called on to meet, and especially in the farming industry the working class is particularly affected. The professor also in a further paragraph states: "There is much evidence of a slow steady drift, accelerated during the past two years, from the unsheltered to the sheltered industries, which is disturbing in increasing measure the normal balance of industry." He does not carry the statement any further in order to show the Conference the causes of that drift. There are many workers drifting into the cities—too many—and those who have a knowledge of the situation in the country districts realize that the significance of the drift of the workers citywards is very plain. There is no question that the conditions that prevail in the country districts as affecting the workers in certain industries where the Court has refused to grant awards are responsible for the position, and those conditions are such that no body of workers could be expected to entertain. If there is a possibility, therefore, of their obtaining work in the cities in the sheltered industries they take it. It is a fact that a large number of the farming community do not offer sufficient inducements to the rural workers to stay in the country. There is no question about that. The employers do their level best to obtain the cheapest labour they can get in various industries, and there is no encouragement given to the married man with his wife—possibly they have one or two children—to stay in the country. I have closely examined during the past three years the advertisements which appear in our papers from day to day. During the past three years, from evidence I have kept, there have been 387 advertisements in the daily press for a married couple without encumbrances,