

- (4) The personnel of the two main committees—Primary Industries Committee and Secondary Industries Committee—should be announced from both sides before the adjournment to-morrow. The setting-up of sub-committees to be arranged by the two main committees when they first meet.
- (5) It was not thought advisable to definitely fix the time by which committees must conclude their deliberations and present their reports. This can be done later while the committee work is proceeding.
- (6) Reports of the committees should be submitted to the Business Committee before the resumption of the general Conference: the Business Committee to determine the order in which they shall be presented to the Conference.
- (7) When the reports of the committees are presented to the general Conference there shall be opportunity for full discussion upon them and upon any of the papers which have been presented to the Conference.
- (8) The appointment of the committee to compile the final report of the Conference to be left over until the next sitting of the Conference.
- (9) The suggestion that Government departmental officers be appointed as chairmen of committees does not commend itself to the Business Committee in all cases. It is desirable that departmental officers shall give all information which the committees may require upon the various matters they consider, but the majority of the members of the Business Committee consider that the committees will have no difficulty in appointing one of their own members to act as chairmen of their meetings.

The report was agreed to.

Discussion on Farmers' Union Paper.

The Chairman: Mr. Polson's statement is now before the Conference in order that any questions may be asked.

Mr. Henderson: I wish to ask Mr. Polson a question. It seems to be taken for granted all through this discussion that there is a third party to disputes, and I notice that the Farmers' Union state specifically that there is a third party—namely, the public. I would ask Mr. Polson, or anybody else who cares to reply, what justification there is for the intervention of the public interest, or any other third-party interest, in any contract relating to wages, or, for that matter, any other contract that may be entered into between individuals, or sections, or groups of individuals. I have my own ideas on the subject, but it would be just as well if we could obtain from Mr. Polson, or anybody else, a precedent in this connection. Has Mr. Polson any precedent for allowing the public to intervene in what is actually a contract between the two groups of individuals?

Mr. Bromley: In a reference on page 75 of his paper Mr. Polson states that the Arbitration Court, being a compulsory tribunal, has to provide an elaborate system of inspection and enforcement, which means inquisitorial interference with private business. I ask if Mr. Polson has given any attention to the shop-stewards movement in Great Britain, where there is no compulsory arbitration, and whether he considers the system here more inquisitorial than, or less than, that of the movement I refer to in Great Britain. My second question is, whether the employers are more responsible than the workers for the fact that so many cases are referred to the Court for settlement. Further on in his paper he states, in giving the early experience of the Court, that ten years of comparative prosperity followed the establishing of the Court, but that the Conciliation Councils were not used as much as expected, although the Court was brought in to settle disputes more generally than was anticipated; no serious industrial stoppages, however, occurred. That would indicate that the settlements which ought to have been arrived at under conciliation were stopped by the employers in the early stages of the Court, thus establishing the principle of placing on the Court the burden of settling disputes which should have been decided by conciliation. My third point is, will Mr. Polson give the Conference more in detail what the opinion of the Farmers' Union is as to what are legitimate profits.

Mr. Baldwin: I wish to ask a question regarding what is a fair wage, a matter Mr. Polson referred to in his statement. He says that question cannot be settled without determining what is a fair rate of interest, and what are fair business profits. Will Mr. Polson tell the Conference if in his opinion the interest paid on the mortgages existing to-day on the farms by the farmers he represents are fair, seeing that the bulk of them are compelled by every clause in their mortgage to do the bulk of their business with the mortgagor. We all realize that that is a big factor in keeping the farmer in bad straits. Dealing with the third-party question, I trust Mr. Polson will stress that particular point in answering—I refer to the question asked by Mr. Henderson—for the reason that the farmers have not had representation in the past before any tribunal. With regard to the right to strike, I would like to know what Mr. Polson would say to the statement that the wheat-growers and the wool-growers when the war was on absolutely refused to sell their products at under a certain rate. They would not let their wool go at less than 45s. and 55s. above the 1914 prices. In dealing with Mr. Justice Sim's refusal to make an award for farm labourers, I wish to state that Mr. Polson's statement is quite correct, and is on record; but Mr. Polson did not tell this Conference that the farm labourers' inquiry was carried into the whole district of Canterbury, not into one centre only, but over the whole of the arable lands.

Mr. Brechin: I rise to a point of order. Is this speaker asking a question or making a speech?

The Chairman: The position is that questions only can be asked, and a delegate is not allowed to make a speech in that connection, but is allowed three minutes in explaining the trend of the question.