paid for what was obtained for 8s. 3½d., in 1914. Take one class of work—waterside work: The rate of pay in 1913–14 was 1s. 5d. per hour. The rate of pay which was granted in accordance with the bonus allowed by the Court of Arbitration was, in 1920, 2s. 3d. per hour. The rate that should have been paid in accordance with the reduction in the purchasing-power of the £1 was 2s. 8d. per hour. This indicates quite clearly that the Court of Arbitration did not at any time during the war period increase wages in accordance with the increase in the cost of living.

In 1921 Parliament gave power to the Court of Arbitration to reduce wages by general order; but it may be as well to point out that Parliament gave no such power to the Court of Arbitration to increase wages by general order. In other words, when prices were rising, wages were increased by the retail method; but when prices became stationary or showed any inclination to drop, wages were reduced by the wholesale method.

In 1914 the Government Statistician and the Court of Arbitration divided the expenditure of the total wage of the worker in purchasing commodity requirements as follows: Rent, 20 per cent.; food, 34 per cent.; clothing, 14 per cent.; fuel and light, 5 per cent.; other items, 27 per cent. It seems that the Court of Arbitration adopted this rule and adjusted wages accordingly; but, while the cost of commodities such as groceries, bread, meat, &c., rose by as much as 80 per cent., house-rent increased by fully 100 per cent. However, in 1924–25 the Court of Arbitration based the rental of a four- or five-roomed house only at 15s. 4d. per week, while the actual rent paid by the workers was fully double that amount.

To put it plainly, the workers are not satisfied with the basis which the Statistician has given us for fixing wages. We say definitely that in assessing the wages of a worker the Court of Arbitration should state—(1) The commodity requirements of a family—say, of four or five people; (2) the prices of these commodities; and (3) the wage necessary to purchase these commodities.

If the manufacturers of these commodities, or the importers of goods not produced in New Zealand, are willing to reduce prices, then definite reasons can be given why wages should be reduced; but when the basic wage now paid to the workers—£4 0s. 8d.—will only purchase two-thirds of the commodity requirements of a family, it is only reasonable to expect that the workers will be dissatisfied with the Court of Arbitration and the wage-fixing institutions generally.

On the other hand, the labour movement does not desire industrial upheavals. We recognize that strikes are generally undesirable and often cause considerable economic loss to the community. We are further of the opinion that it should be the duty of our legislators to amend the law in such a way as will give the parties concerned every opportunity of adjusting any industrial dispute that may arise. A strike should not, in our opinion, take place except as a very last resource on the part of the workers to secure economic or social justice. Even when a strike or lockout does take place, the parties must resort to some system of arbitration or conciliation in the end. It may be that the workers or the employers are in the best position to adjust a dispute after a strike takes place, but this does not settle the dispute. For that reason we are in favour of arbitration as against the strike weapon; but in saying so we assure this Conference that we do not desire an arbitration system which is loaded against us. Further, we are of the opinion that there are several methods of arbitration which could be adopted in the settlement of industrial disputes independent of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act.

Last year the Government introduced an amendment to the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, and we are directed by the representatives of 110,000 workers to state to this Conference that they would prefer to have no arbitration or conciliation Act whatever than to attempt to carry on a trade-union movement under the proposed legislation. The original framers of our arbitration system set out as a general principle to foster industrial unionism both from the employers' side and from the workers' side. The recent proposed amendment to the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act set out to strangle trade-unionism as far as the workers were concerned.

The Act at present is far too narrow in its outlook. It confines the operations of trade-unions to one locality, when every one knows that manufacture and transport to-day as a general rule are operated from a national centre. There should be a provision in our industrial law, then, for the registration of national unions and national awards and industrial agreements.

The labour movement insists on the right of the industrial unions to decide whether they shall register under the Court of Arbitration or not. We contend further that neither the Government nor the employer should be empowered by law to compel a majority of the workers in any industry to submit an industrial dispute to the Court of Arbitration if the workers are opposed to this course. Under the present law the employers of labour, with the assistance of a minority of the workers in any industry, can compel the majority to accept a decision of the Court of Arbitration even if this majority were opposed to submitting their dispute to the Court. If, for instance, a union cancels its registration under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act at the present time they are compelled to take a ballot, and if the majority of the workers engaged in the industry are in favour of cancellation the Registrar usually grants cancellation; but fifteen men in any industry can re-register a new union, and the Court will usually grant them an award. We suggest that, in order to obtain harmony within the industry and between the workers and the employers and amongst the workers themselves, if a union takes a ballot to cancel its registration and a majority decide on that course, then before any union is registered under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act another ballot must be taken, and if a majority are in favour of re-registration, then the decision of the majority should be carried out.

Dealing with disputes in industries where awards or industrial agreements are current at the time, if there is a stoppage of work through a strike or lockout, power should be given to either the Minister of Labour, the Registrar of Industrial Unions, or the Court of Arbitration to convene a compulsory conference of the parties. No section of workers is of sufficient importance to stop the wheels of industry in New Zealand, and no employer or section of employers is of sufficient importance to create an industrial upheaval in the Dominion. An industrial dispute in any important industry