

of comfort was lowered, equal service is still demanded from them for the former value of the pound. The next question from Mr. Brechin is : “ Generally speaking, the position of the workers is worse when improved methods of production are introduced. Does Mr. Roberts disagree with Mr. Nash’s suggestion with regard to improved methods being introduced on farms, such as manuring ? ” My statement is not a contradiction of Mr. Nash in any way whatever. If there are one hundred men employed in a factory—let it even be a farm or any other place—and new machinery is introduced and it displaces fifty of those workers, throwing them on the unemployed market, it is naturally only common-sense to recognize the fact that those fifty workers are worse off than before the machinery was introduced. They are not able to find a new market. If, as Mr. Nash stated, reviving the soil of the present farms by artificial manuring increases the production of the farms, and that increased productivity allows the farmer to employ more labour on the farm because of his better income, then it would not affect the position.

*A Delegate :* He does not need the labour.

*Mr. Roberts :* He does not need the labour ! If you concentrate all the manure in the world on the farm it still needs the addition of the human element, because it does not stop the noxious weeds and plants from growing up, as one can see all over New Zealand to-day. On the other hand, there are many of us here who have worked on farms, and we know what the conditions are. But one has only to travel on the trains to see farms going to waste in New Zealand at the present time through lack of proper attention and capital. One only needs to read the Government reports to find that that is true. As an illustration, I may say that I worked for some time in the Wellington Gas Co.’s Works. At that time there were thirty-six stokers employed, but a new machine was introduced and to-day nine or ten men are producing more gas than forty men previously.

*Mr. Brechin :* Well, what about it ? That is our question.

*Mr. Roberts :* There is this much about it : that the money paid to the workers in wages in those days is now being paid in interest on borrowed capital for new plant—generally paid outside New Zealand—and this prevents the workers purchasing more of Mr. Brechin’s produce—butter, and so on.

*Mr. Brechin :* Would you do away with machinery ?

*Mr. Roberts :* No. But I have yet to learn that the farmers or the manufacturers have invented all the machines. The workers are responsible for more inventions of machines than anybody else, and they should benefit.

*Mr. Brechin :* Do not they get better gas ?

*Mr. Roberts :* Well, I pay more for gas than I ever paid before, except for the “ gas ” here, which is a deluge. The next question is also from Mr. Brechin : “ Is Mr. Roberts aware that in Australia the farm worker is compelled to pay 4d. to 6d. more per pound for butter than the town-dweller ? ” He is in a position to do it—in a very sound, strong position to do it. I have here a copy of the *Queensland Industrial Gazette*, and here are the wages paid in Queensland : First of all, their maximum hours are forty-four per week, as against the fifty-six to sixty hours under our cheese and butter factories award ; and they get overtime for any hours worked in excess of forty-four.

*Mr. Brechin :* That has nothing to do with my question. What I asked was, “ Are you in favour of the town-dweller having to pay 4d. to 6d. more than the farmers get for their butter overseas ? ” The farm-dweller is a very small user of butter, and he does not pay for it. You are hedging the question.

*Mr. Roberts :* I am not hedging your question.

*Mr. Brechin :* You are dodging it.

*Mr. Roberts :* I am not. You do not want to quarrel, do you ?

*The Chairman :* His time is very nearly up.

*Mr. Brechin :* We will give him an extension.

*Mr. Roberts :* To proceed ; In Queensland the rate of pay for the buttermaker is £5 10s. per week ; for graders, £5 5s. a week ; for testers, £5 a week ; for butter-cutters (cutting over 4½ tons a week), £5 3s. ; and for all other male employees, £4 15s. per week. As against these figures, the wages under our award here are : First assistant, £5 3s. 6d. a week ; second assistant, £4 17s. 6d. a week ; third assistant, £4 10s. 5d. ; fourth assistant, £4 7s. ; all others, £4 1s. per week : showing clearly that these men are unable to pay the higher price.

*Mr. Brechin :* Sir, I want to rise to a point of order. I do not know whether Mr. Roberts is intentionally evading the point.

*Mr. Roberts :* I am not evading it. Here is your question ; read it yourself.

*Mr. Brechin :* My question is : “ Is Mr. Roberts aware that in Australia the town worker is compelled to pay from 4d. to 6d. a pound more for butter than the farmers receive for butter on the London market ? ”

*Mr. Roberts :* I was only giving the case of the dairy-workers ; and the Australian town worker is able to do that, too.

*Mr. Polson :* I move that Mr. Roberts be given an extension of time. We have asked him a large number of questions ; it is only fair he should have more time.

*Mr. Brechin :* I second the motion.

*The Chairman :* If you are all agreeable, of course, Mr. Roberts can have an extension.

*Delegates :* No, no.

*Mr. Roberts :* Well, I say I should at least get the time I have lost through people interrupting. The position is that the workers in Australia are well able to pay that for their butter, and we say that the same should apply to New Zealand. The higher the wage—within reason, of course ; there must be limits—the higher the price the worker can pay for what the farmer produces. Just another question I would like to answer, and that is the one raised by Mr. Smith about the 1913 strike. He