

long hours. One said that when the cargo came dribbling down, as it sometimes did, there must be some one there to receive it. I asked them whether they could not arrange something better. One man said he did not like to leave it to any one else, and he did not see any way out of the difficulty. Officer or no officer, if a man has a grievance we are ready to remedy it, whether he is the least or the highest in our service. I positively say this, moreover: that if I found any man working for a greater number of hours than was good for him I would submit that matter to the directors, and it would not be allowed any longer. Talking of officers, I may tell you we wanted to transfer a non-union crew into another boat in Sydney, but the non-unionists declined to be transferred. They said, "We will not sail with unionist officers. We have had enough of them coming down the coast."—(Laughter.)—You see by that it is not all on one side. I say again to Mr. Millar, take off the embargo which you have laid on the men and you will see how many will be back in less than a fortnight. Now about this telegram. The masters and chief officers said they were going to get up an association that would not be dragged through the mire. I said I had no objection to their having an association so long as they kept by themselves. I am very happy that they should have an association. My friend Mr. Ansell said something about free men in the coal-mines and the danger through gas explosions. Now, if I am correctly informed, men go along the drives every morning before the men go to work. I do not think he need have said that, for there are many non-union miners who are thoroughly practical men. I do not know of any loss of life through this.

*Mr. Ansell:* Refer to your own pits, Mr. McLean, and see the loss of life that has been occasioned.

*Hon. Mr. McLean:* I do not know of any pit belonging to us where there has been loss of life. It may be right for you to frighten everybody. I do not complain. I do not think I should trespass on your time any longer. Probably I have wearied you a good deal. From the employers' point of view I have shown you that the Shipowners' Association never moved a step until they were driven into this thing. I have shown you that we did not move a step here. Although it was necessary to work the wharf in Sydney with non-union labour, that was no reason why the men should have been called out of the ships here. Even after they were taken out of the ships we did not do a single thing or say anything to show a disposition to retaliate. We have got along very well with the unions in the past, and we may get on with them very well in the future. And now that you have heard all about this dispute, can any of you tell us what it is all about?

*Mr. Sandford:* The dispute is this: as to whether labour has the right to federate. There is no doubt that is what it has now come to. Suppose this attack had not been made, this question would still have been raised. The attack was originated by the Shipowners' Association in practically denying to labour the right to federate.

*Hon. Mr. McLean:* But the officers were affiliated with the Trades Hall, and that is quite a different thing from the Maritime Council here. Do you think it right that all the ships in the country should be stopped because a baker has a row with his men? Under the circumstances of the Trades Hall affiliation that was possible. I think the great difficulty which the Maritime Council had in arriving at a proper knowledge of the position was that they were not brought face to face with the parties concerned, and that they so seldom met together. How often have they all met? Before a dispute of this magnitude had been entered upon you should all have met in consultation with each other, and when you met your first consideration ought to have been as to the means which could be adopted to avoid the severe struggle that has taken place. If the dispute was one occurring only between the Shipowners' Association and the Seamen's Union, what earthly good was it to any one to call all these people out? You talk of labour fighting capital! What is capital in this country but the hard earnings of saving and industrious men put into all kinds of co-operative and limited-liability undertakings? In effect, these men who have gone out on strike are really fighting to kill their own money. What is all the acquired wealth of this colony that we sometimes hear of? Where is it? A good many squatters from my quarter have gone into the Insolvency Court. Farmers also are not in a very brilliant position. How many men are working from dawn to dark for less in the way of wages than half a crown a day! It is true, indeed, they have their own little place, their piece of ground, so that, although they are earning little money, they are independent. It would be far better if people of the towns would go into the country and assist in the settlement of the land. You could grow nearly everything you eat, and, as I have said just now, if your income is small, it would be an independency.

*Mr. Johnson:* You must alter the land-laws before you can do that.

*Hon. Mr. McLean:* If you come down our way I assure you you can get as much land as you want. I am sorry to say that this matter has frightened timid people too much. The thing will right itself. We should not be frightened. We will do what we can to provide employment, but you must not ask us to do impossibilities. Let the unionists and non-unionists work with each other. They should consider the words of Mr. Champion. Who would object to unionism as he puts it?

*Captain Highman:* He knows nothing about it.

*The Chairman:* He is a renegade.

*Hon. Mr. McLean:* I do not know whether he is a renegade or not, but there is nothing in his principles that any fair man can object to. However, it is not for me to bandy words. We are all looking for a way out of this difficulty. I am quite ready to discuss the whole matter with any one. But I say again you must not ask us to do impossibilities. No one regrets more than I do to see heart-broken men hunting about for employment. But all industries are stopped; that is the reason so many men are seeking for work. Why was it that you interfered with them? There would have been less suffering: the dispute would have been fought out quite as well without doing all this mischief. I am sure that in all your hearts you must think of the wives and children, the whole families, that are suffering through this unfortunate strike. Not one of you but must think in your heart, if you have any feeling there at all, for the suffering of your fellow-people. I know I do.