

57. You complained about the conditions laid down in the Bill?—Yes.

58. Are you aware that those conditions can be modified?—Yes.

59. You are aware that the Arbitration Court has a great many industries to deal with, where the conditions surrounding the work have been very varied, and that they have modified those conditions?—Yes, but not in an industry like ours.

60. Do you consider it impossible to so arrange such conditions as to make them workable?—As farmers we have found it to be impossible to frame an award ourselves that would be considered reasonable either to the employee or to ourselves.

61. If the Court made an award which the farmers considered reasonable, would that be workable?—The conditions are so varied. We have to deal with a number of men coming to us who are not able to earn the minimum wage. The country has to face the problem of what to do with these men. We cannot keep them.

62. Do you not think that would apply to other industries as well as yours?—No, because these men have been drafted out and drafted out.

63. Take the work of a nurseryman—digging, planting, sowing: that is a phase of land-work, and the men are physically competent to do it?—It is so hard to explain. There is so much light work that any one could do it.

64. You know an award has been made to meet the varying conditions in connection with that work?—But that is entirely different to ours.

65. If an award was made for a certain number of hours, to be regulated as the farmers thought fit, would that be workable?—Well, as Mr. Clothier pointed out, owing to the state of his land his men went away for a week. Do you think the Arbitration Court would allow us to take that week off when counting the hours?

66. Do you suggest that the lower-paid men have no right to ask for an award to compel an employer not paying the good wages to pay according to the standard of the good employer?—My contention is that if a good man is receiving bad pay it is his own fault. You cannot expect a farmer to pay a good wage to an inferior man. At the beginning he has to find him in board and lodging.

67. Assuming that a good man were being employed by a farmer at a low wage—you say he could find employment elsewhere—but could he find employment elsewhere at a fair wage?—Yes, he would have no difficulty. We cannot get enough good men.

68. You mentioned that you recognised that the old Act was obsolete?—Yes.

69. In what respect—with regard to the conciliatory spirit?—Yes, we consider it is the Arbitration Act now, not the Conciliation Act.

70. And you are in favour, if you are brought under the Act, of allowing the Industrial Councils to supersede the Conciliation Boards?—Yes.

71. How long has the agitation to bring the farm labourers under the Act been going on?—For the last eighteen months.

72. And recently the agitation has been stronger?—Yes.

73. And I understood you to say that recently eight thousand farmers were cited?—Yes.

74. How long has Mr. McCullough been participating in that agitation?—Practically from the beginning; so long as we have been tacked on to it he has been its president.

75. For two months?—Over eighteen months.

76. Is he president of the union that is promoting the agitation?—Yes. He was elected president some fifteen months ago, and was re-elected again last August.

77. You seem to be strongly opposed to the farm labourers being brought under the Act: do you not consider it equally reasonable that the farmers and settlers should be brought under the operations of the Act as the employers of domestic workers?—We are not working against the men, but we contend that the men are contented with their present position; that it would be impossible to frame an award that would be suitable for our industry, and that it would be as much against the interests of the men as the farmers to bring them under the Arbitration Act.

78. Mr. Poole asked you a question with regard to the price of wheat, and seemed to be of opinion that the farmers at the present time were charging a larger price for it and gaining an advantage. Assuming that the standard price of wheat is fixed at 3s., what would be the result to the farmer if he had a bad season?—If the standard price was fixed I would grow fat lambs.

79. You would not grow wheat?—No.

80. In bad seasons the farmers would lose considerably?—Yes.

81. And in good seasons?—They would not make more than a fair profit.

82. Your opinion is that if the farm labourers are brought under the operation of the Arbitration Act the farming and dairying interests would be very seriously prejudiced?—I am perfectly certain they would.

83. (To Mr. Talbot.) You have a large family?—Yes.

84. In working your farm, do you pay each member of your family a weekly wage?—No, we are working together.

85. What would be the effect if members of families were brought under the Act?—Probably in my case it would make no difference. I trust them, and they trust me.

86. It would not be a matter of trust, you would be working under an award?—They would deal with the matter afterwards. If left alone they can make the best of their time, and each one endeavours to do his best.

87. The great proportion of settlers work their homesteads in conjunction with their families?—If they did not they would not work them at all.

88. Under an award each member of the family would retain the amount that was paid to him: what would be the effect of working a farm under those circumstances?—It would very nearly break it up. It is by the aid of our families that we are able to get on.