

think it is a reasonable thing for us to appeal to the Committee to strike the clause out of the present Bill. We are quite satisfied to leave the matter in the hands of the Magistrate and the two assessors appointed by him.

5. *Hon. Mr. Millar.*] You are not aware that this right of appeal was suggested by some of the unionists, who said they would not trust their cases in the hands of some of the Magistrates?—I was not aware of that. But we want prompt decisions. We want no delay, but to get a decision in the case before the Court one way or the other. Section 20: We wish to strike out the first line of this section, and that will leave it to read as follows: "The judgment in any such action shall be enforceable in the same manner as a judgment for debt or damages in the Magistrate's Court, and in no other manner." We say that is fair and reasonable. We then strike out all the remaining clauses in Part II, dealing with fines inflicted on employees, giving the right to the employer to collect the fine from the wages of the employee. We say that this provision is opposed to the Truck Act, which we all think so much of, and it is also opposed to the true spirit of the labour legislation brought forward in this country during the last fifteen or sixteen years.

6. *The Chairman.*] You object to all the remainder of Part II?—Yes, and we say this, and I want to make it quite clear: that, notwithstanding the fact that a man may be liable to imprisonment for disobeying an order, we would sooner see a man imprisoned than have the right given to the employer to deduct from his wages any fine which might be imposed upon him. Any member of this Committee can clearly see the friction, the bad feeling which is likely to be created between the employer and the employee every week when the employer has to deduct so-much from the employee's wages. We say the fine should be collected in the ordinary way from the Magistrate's Court. I do not think I need speak any further on that particular matter. Part III of the Bill, dealing with conciliation, in our opinion, should be struck out.

7. The whole of the Part?—The whole of Part III. This refers to Councils of Conciliation to take the place of the Conciliation Boards which at present exist.

8. *Hon. Mr. Millar.*] What do you propose to place in their stead?—We propose that section 60 of the present Act shall be repealed. There have been complaints ever since that clause was placed in the Act, on account of the delays, friction, and unrest that have been caused.

9. *The Chairman.*] That is the famous Willis clause?—Yes. We say, Repeal clause 60 of the Act, and give the Boards power to make their recommendations binding—the same as an Arbitration Court award—until such time as the Court visits the particular district affected, and then either party should have the right of appeal to the Court. We know that if the Boards had had that power many disputes would never have been taken to the Arbitration Court. I have a case in my mind where one of the employers stated that had the Board's decision been binding they would have accepted it, but though the Court might agree to the Board's recommendations it also might give a decision more favourable to the employers. We anticipate that fully 80 per cent. of the cases would be settled by the Boards if their awards were binding until appealed against, and that there would be that much less for the Court to do.

10. *Hon. Mr. Millar.*] You are aware that provision was made in last year's Bill that an award of an Industrial Council should be binding until the appeal was heard by the Arbitration Court?—That is so.

11. Yet resolutions are coming in from unions all over the country opposing it? We recommended last year that the Boards' recommendations should have the same power as an Arbitration Court award.

12. That was offered in connection with the Industrial Councils, and that is the part of the Bill which has been ignominiously rejected by nearly every union that has dealt with it?—I do not think so.

13. Nearly every union in Canterbury has passed a resolution opposing *in toto* the Bill of last session?—I have in my possession—not here, but in Christchurch—letters from over thirty unions protesting against the Bill of last session in regard to the establishment of Industrial Councils, and asking the Government to give more power to the Boards of Conciliation—the same power, in fact, as is suggested in regard to the Industrial Councils—that is, to give the Boards power to settle disputes and make their recommendations binding until the Court comes round. I have a copy of the suggestions of my own union, in which it is said, "We therefore urge upon you the necessity of giving the Conciliation Boards increased powers to make their recommendations binding on both parties, and give either party the right to appeal against the decision of the Boards. This would prevent the delays which have taken place in the past, and we find the unions have full confidence in the Conciliation Boards." That was sent to members of this House and to the Hon. the Minister of Labour. And that is our opinion to-day. I now come to Part IV, "Miscellaneous." Section 45 we agree with.

14. *The Chairman.*] You agree with section 45: Are you sure?—No, I have made a mistake. What I meant to say was that we agree with the clause in the Act at the present time giving the power to seven persons to form an industrial union; and I may say in this connection that I find, if the clause in the Bill is carried, it will mean the killing of sixty-two unions in New Zealand.

15. How is that?—Because their membership is under the number provided for—twenty-five.

16. *Hon. Mr. Millar.*] It does not cancel the registration of any existing union?—Then I say our argument is equally strong. If we can find sixty-two unions benefitting by the Act, it is only right we should give other sixty-two unions the same privileges as exist at the present time.

17. You believe in weak unions?—I believe that where a union only consists of seven members it should have the right to advocate for and secure better wages if it is not satisfied with those prevailing.