

18. Would it not be an advantage to them to join other and larger unions?—I do not think it could be worked. For argument's sake, take the case of the Rattan and Wicker Workers' Union of Christchurch, which is a small body, and let us say they are going to join the Boot-makers' Union—

19. It would be the Furniture Trade Union in their case?—Well, I do not think it would be satisfactory—there would be friction between them. I do not think they could succeed in carrying on their business together, or would help one another in that direction. Section 46 we agree with. With regard to section 47, we consider that every member of a union should have a vote in the appointment of members and acting-members of the Arbitration Court, and that the persons elected should have an absolute majority of the votes recorded.

20. Do you not think that would give a union like the Railway Servants' Union, which numbers six thousand, an undue advantage in the election of a member of the Arbitration Court?—We say it is a democratic principle, and we believe in democratic principles. Every individual should have a voice in the selection.

21. That means that four unions in the country can put in at any time whatever man they like. That is the position if you give the individual vote. Four unions can elect the member of the Arbitration Court, although there are three hundred unions registered. I was trying to protect the small unions?—Well, we object to section 47, and make the suggestion that every member of a union should have a vote. Section 48 we agree with. Section 49 we recommend should be struck out and these words inserted in its place: "That when any payment of wages has been made and knowingly accepted by a worker for less than the rate specified in the award, no action shall be brought by the worker against his employer to recover for himself the difference between the wages so actually paid and the wages legally payable save within three months after the day on which the wages claimed in the action became due and payable. Any such moneys due beyond the period of three months shall be recoverable and paid into the Consolidated Fund."

22. *The Chairman.*] It shall not be possible for the man to claim for himself, but the amount may be claimed and paid into the Treasury?—That is so. Clause 50 we agree with, also clause 51 with its three subsections. Clause 52 we agree with, but clause 53, dealing with the issue of permits by Factory Inspectors, we strongly object to.

23. *Hon. Mr. Millar.*] Whom do you propose to give the power to? The Conciliation Boards will be put out of existence altogether?—We have made a suggestion already. A communication was made to this Committee in order that it might make a note of it and give it its careful consideration. We suggest this in its place: "In the case of workers who are incompetent of commanding the minimum wage, they may refer their case to a committee consisting of two persons appointed by the employers working under the award and two persons appointed by the employees, who shall deal with the application, and their decision shall be final. Every permit to work below the minimum wage shall be indorsed by the committee, and the permit shall only apply to the employer who for the time being is willing to employ the incompetent worker. A complete list of all permits shall be in the possession of the local committee of the employers and the workers' union. All permits must be renewed at least once every six months." That provision is in the bootmakers' present award, and has been in existence since 1896. We have found it work very smoothly indeed. We get a number of applications for permits which are dealt with by this committee, and I can say this without fear of contradiction: that there has only been one deadlock in connection with this matter since 1896, the year mentioned above. That happened in Dunedin and turned out favourably for the men, because the man applying for the permit on account of his employer saying he was not worth the minimum wage got a job elsewhere at 5s. a week more than the minimum, showing that our union was correct in saying that the man was worth the minimum. This matter is important, because it would be unjust to take the power out of our hands and place it with the Inspector of Factories. There would be no one else to sit with him under this Bill, and he has the power given to him to issue permits after hearing evidence. We say it would be unfair to do that, and take away from us what we have gained under our award. We trust the Committee will take our suggestion into its earnest consideration, and embody it in the Bill.

24. What is the present law with regard to granting under-rate permits?—What I have read is in our award obtained from the Arbitration Court, and, although we have not gone before the Court for the last five or six years, this is always placed in our agreements, and the employers are willing to have it placed in.

25. Who grants the permits at the present time—the unions as a whole?—The only way I can answer that question would be this—and I am not in a position to speak for every union: that most of the permits are dealt with under the Arbitration Court awards in various ways, while some unions have the very clause we suggest. The Furniture Trades' Union in Christchurch have it in their award, although perhaps not in the same words.

26. And if the Committee does not agree?—The matter ends.

27. Does not the Chairman of the Conciliation Board issue the permit?—He has never done it in our case, for it has always been left in the hands of the four persons on the committee. Since 1896 there has never been any friction, only the one deadlock that I have mentioned, and then events proved that we were justified—or our men were—in the action taken.

28. *The Chairman.*] Does the arrangement work equally well with the furniture-workers?—I was talking to one of the workers just before I left for Wellington, and he told me it was working very well. He said that it was not the wish of his union to have anything different.

29. *Mr. EU.*] Do you think the clause in the Bill will prevent you having that?—We strongly object to the power being given to the Inspector of Factories.