

Committee will look up the evidence given before the Committee last year it will see all the arguments used and elaborated very fully. Part IV: Section 45 we disapprove of. That is amending the present law which gives seven persons the right to register as an industrial union under the present Act. One speaker at the Conference pointed out that if this were put into operation it would knock the life out of over sixty unions in the Dominion.

27. Are you sure you are reading it aright?—We read it this way: that in future, if this Bill becomes law, it will require twenty-five men or women to constitute a union before that union can get registered under the Act.

28. It would apply to the future, but there is nothing which cancels registration below these numbers which are now registered?—Lawyers may tell you it will. At any rate, there is always this possibility: that new industries may spring up where very few men are employed. Mr. Reardon, secretary of the General Labourers' Union, gave us a case of that kind, and also Mr. Breen gave us a case where a number of men employed in a certain industry embraced only from seven to ten. They desired to form a union and secure some fixity of conditions. They formed the union, and could register under the present law. Now, if the present law is amended so as to make it necessary that there should be twenty-five members before the union could be registered, then the men in that industry or any similar industry could not organize at all; and if this Bill had a retrospective effect it would knock the life out of over sixty unions in the Dominion at the present time. I know that there are nineteen or twenty unions in Canterbury whose membership is less than twenty-five, and I know that several of them are affiliated to the Trades and Labour Council, and at least two of them have passed resolutions denouncing this particular clause and calling for its deletion.

29. Would it by any means meet your views if there was a saving clause stating that it should not apply to present unions?—No. An instance might arise where sixteen, or seventeen, or eighteen people might desire to form a union, and if this law was put into operation they would be prevented.

30. *Mr. Arnold.*] Your point is that if there are sixty unions now in existence containing under that number there might be another sixty in a few years?—Yes. Sixty unions have less than twenty-five members. If the unions continue to grow at the same pace as during the last few years, then all the new unions will not be able to register at all. We agree to clause 46. Clause 47: I might say that we approve of the principle which the Minister is trying to give effect to in this clause, but we desire to see the clause amended in the direction of giving every financial member of the union the right to cast a vote in connection with the election of members and acting-members of the Court. It gives a union of less than fifty members one vote, and a union of more than fifty one vote for every fifty of its members. We desire to see that amended in the direction of giving every financial member of the union registered under the Act the right to cast a vote for the election of members of the Court.

31. *The Chairman.*] That is as the elections are conducted at present?—No. At the present time one union has one vote, whether it has a thousand or seven members. This proposes to give a union with 1,000 members twenty votes, and unions with less than fifty members one vote. We desire to see the democratic principle applied, of one financial member one vote.

32. *Mr. Ell.*] Have you any suggestion to make as to the way the votes shall be cast? Personally I suggest that every individual member receive a ballot-paper?—That is what I should suggest be done. The name of the candidates should be placed on the ballot-paper the same as in the general election, and the unionists should send their votes in to the secretary, who should send them in to the Department. At the present time the unions have one vote each, and they cast that vote on behalf of a certain candidate, and against another candidate.

33. How is that vote arrived at?—By the vote of the union. There might be a hundred financial members of the union. A special or ordinary meeting may be convened to do certain business, amongst which is to vote as to who shall represent the union on the Arbitration Court. Out of the hundred financial members only ten may attend, and if those ten vote, say, for Mr. Slater, the result of their vote is communicated to Mr. Tregear.

34. *The Chairman.*] Each union has a vote on the question as to whom they shall support—Smith or Jones—and having decided for Smith the vote goes to Smith?—Yes.

35. *Mr. Arnold.*] What you suggest now is that ballot-papers shall be sent round by the Department to the various secretaries, after which they are to be sent back to the Department, and the candidate who gets the majority of the aggregate votes cast shall be elected?—That is so.

36. *The Chairman.*] You practically want a ballot of the unions?—That is what we want—a ballot of the unions. Clause 48 we agree with. Clause 49 we desire amended so that the worker who is paid a less rate than the minimum, and who sues for the recovery between the minimum and what has been paid, shall only receive the difference for three months, or up to three months.

37. That he shall be limited to three months?—Yes; but we desire to see this also: that the employer shall not be freed from liability for any amount in excess of the three months' limitation, and we say that the employer should be compelled by law to pay all the difference in excess of three months into the Consolidated Fund. There have been cases where workers have worked at a rate less than the minimum wages, and on occasions they have deliberately entered into an agreement with their employers to work at a rate less than the minimum. Six or eight months elapses without any one knowing anything about it, and the union cannot find out anything about it. Then the worker has a row with his employer and sues him for the difference, extending over, perhaps, a six- or eight-monthly period.

38. Up to that time he would have been working in collusion with the employer?—Yes; but the employer has been breaking the law. There are cases where, if the three months' limitation did not apply, great injustice would be done, because some workers entering into an occupation