

lation of master and servanthip. This idea in our opinion is an erroneous one, as in actual fact within the sphere of industry to-day the relation of master and servant only exists as a fiction of custom. In the historical period when bond service obtained the relation of master and servant was a real fact having full force and effect. The truth is that the relationship now existing between employer and employed is the trading relationship of buyer and seller. Both parties own something which the other requires. Neither is under any legal or moral compulsion to give that which he owns except upon terms of agreement. It would save an immense amount of trouble, experience and waste if both parties would candidly and constantly recognise that the order of relationship existing between them is that of trading associates jointly engaged in the exchange of services which are necessary for the supplying of the wants of both. A great amount of the industrial unrest of our time is due to the wrong conceptions of the extremists on both sides—employers asserting a mastership that is beyond their right and workers asserting a wage slavery that is a distortion of the true meaning of the terms used. It is remarkable that both sets of extremists are engaged in upholding a fiction that is not in accordance with historical and actual fact.

THE FEDERATION'S PROGRAMME.

Assuming that our definition of the actual relationship between employers and workers is correct, let us examine how far the proposed programme is a movement for a new relationship. Clauses 1 and 2 are proposals which, if applied on broad lines and with a full recognition that the worker as well as the employer may take free action in these directions, is, in our opinion, a move towards a closer association of the respective interests, and is a new order of relationship in the sense of being a fuller expression of the nominal partnership of Capital and Labour than has hitherto prevailed. Piecework, bonus systems, profit sharing, being actually modifications of the wages system, are not either new, or in any sense a fresh relationship.

The questions of superannuation funds, unemployment, and invalidity insurance, and the providing of workers' homes are all questions of general social policy having more relation to political action than to the issue of the order of relationship between the employer and his employees. It thus appears to us that it is only in the first two clauses that the Employers' Federation has dealt with the matter of actual relationship between employer and employed. We commend its plan as being an expansion of the existing relationship along the lines of recognition of the common humanity of the elements to be dealt with. If it is good for the employers to confer with the workers in the workshops, to hold joint meetings, to hear and discuss matters of assumed grievance or suggestions, if

educational propaganda is good both for employers and employed—and we recognise that these are desirable—then we fail the more to understand why a national conference of employers and employed may not be of value.

THE FACTOR OF ORGANISATION.

Where we think the federation has made a mistake in its programme is in practically ignoring the fact that there exists to-day, not only an individual relationship between the employer and those immediately employed by him, but there is a general relationship between the bodies of labour on the one hand and of employers on the other. To attempt to treat this general relationship as if it were non-existent is not strength, but weakness. For the employers to operate through their association and federation and then ask that they may deal with their workers individually is simply to toy with the gravest issues, to engender more suspicion amongst the mass of workers, and to accentuate the class bitterness which unfortunately already exists. To attempt to explain that the antagonism is only towards the extremists of the Labour movement can have no weight, seeing that the action of ignoring the Labour organisations is a reflection upon the whole Labour movement.

The one thing that seems to us to be more necessary towards establishing a new order of relationship between employers and employed, both individually and collectively, is the manifestation of absolute candour in facing the issues that have to be dealt with.

We agree with the Employers' Federation that new relations between the individual employer and their workers "must be established." We contend, however that there can be little hope of doing this unless the general relations of employers and workers are candidly faced and freely examined. In order to secure this candid examination we have urged, and will continue to urge, the wisdom of calling a joint national industrial conference.

We ask for this conference not to deal with the theories or announced aims and intentions of either the workers' organisations or the employers, but for both sides to face the national issue of what the present industrial relations entail, how they can best be improved, and what are the best means of constant adjustment.

If the federation wants its own programme carried out the National Conference will not hinder, but help materially in that direction. Industrial matters have passed beyond the stage when they were the concern of one or two classes within the State. They are the concern of everybody, as they affect everybody, and that is our justification for discussing the question.

Mr. Albert Spence has been appointed to represent the Auckland builders when dealing with building permits under the regulations framed by the Board of Trade.