

used my influence against that Bill. The clause that a fireman must have a colonial discharge was struck out, as no doubt it was put in in view of these troubles. It was struck out very properly. As a matter of fact, the Bill did get through the Upper House. Though I know I get the credit of it, there are not many who use less influence politically than I do. Any advice I can give I willingly give. I have refused office often; I do not want office. I am mixing as little with politics as I can. You must not think that I am exercising any more influence in the Upper House, for there they can think for themselves. I will now come to the next important point in this discussion, which has been raised by Mr. Ansell, from Greymouth. I do not much object to Mr. Ansell putting it from his point of view about the reduction in the quantity of coal, but now I will tell my story. He has talked about the Wallsend Mine being shut up. I put it to Mr. Ansell himself, or to Mr. Lomas, or any of them, would they not say that mine was a "white elephant," which should be shut up? "Faults" were all round it. Six thousand pounds was required to "prove" these "faults." Since we became interested £3,000 has been spent there. Mr. Ansell knows that steps were taken to get the water out of the Coal-pit Heath. If we could get a market for the coal every miner at Greymouth would get full employment. Regarding the falling-off in the output, Mr. Ansell should have told you there was, owing to the Newcastle strike, a great pressure used to get as much coal as possible. We were doing a roaring trade, and got out as much as we could; we stuffed the railways. Would he, or any one, say that could continue? You are aware that coal-pits are being opened all over New Zealand. Every lignite-pit as well as coal-pit is being opened. We used to have the contract for carrying coal all along the coast. What is the position now? The Nightcaps Company take the contract for the railway until it meets the Kaitangata Company; the Kaitangata Company takes it up to Shag Point; the Shag Point Company then takes it a bit further. What is got from Greymouth is taken some to Oamaru, some to Timaru and Lyttelton, and some here. It is a very good coal for railway purposes and for gas, but people do not take kindly to it for household use, though half Westport and half Greymouth makes a capital household coal. It was said that we owned the Koranui. It is true we amalgamated with Captain Williams. He had the pit. He said to us, "You shall not have the steamers unless you take the pit." We had no desire for the pit, but we could not help ourselves. We sold that, and so got out of the coal trade. We bought the Westport Company's steamers, and so got the carrying contract. All the contract now existing between ourselves and the Westport Company is a year-to-year contract, and we are only bound by ties of fair-dealing towards each other. We are quite willing to rely on each other. They cannot give us coal now, and we do not demand it. Our contract is from year to year, and our relations are likely to continue in the same satisfactory condition. I think the representatives of the miners here will give us credit, as Mr. Lomas gave us credit yesterday, for raising the coal-output of New Zealand. It is to our interest to see an industry such as that revived. We wish to see all the industries in New Zealand flourishing. It is a most unfortunate thing that any steps should ever have been taken to stop the important industries of New Zealand. That must, even from a labourer's point of view, bring a great infliction on your co-workers. I will now refer to the alleged agreement with the Grey Valley Company. I never heard of that agreement, and would have been no party to any such agreement. We would not for a single moment have allowed any one to say that we should not have our own coal. The thing is absurd. I did advise Mr. Ansell to get out all the coal he could. So far as the Union Company is concerned, we refused to go outside and get foreign coal, and we are at this present moment working with coal from Newcastle and New Zealand. But there is a large quantity of coal coming here, which will interfere with the coal industry of this colony. But that is not done by us. That is a matter the miners ought to consider: Having now heard all about this dispute, I ask you to say whether the Union Company had anything to do with originating it. I emphatically say that we did not bring it on. We did everything we possibly could to avoid it. It was forced on us through the men being taken out of our ships. You can search for yourselves and see whether it is true that we ever inserted any advertisement in a newspaper here, as has been stated, until after our men were withdrawn. The papers are there; they will speak for themselves.

*Mr. Boase:* Are you prepared to say, Mr. McLean, that there never was an agreement between you and the Grey Valley Company?

*Hon. Mr. McLean:* I never heard of it. We would not have allowed it. Why, the idea of agreeing to an agreement that you would not give yourself your own coal is ridiculous.—(Laughter.)—I have seen many things in the Greymouth papers which were well worth reading, and which appeared to me purely imaginary, even to Mr. Gibb's letter. Mr. Gibb is a man who made a good impression on me. He is an enthusiast in this cause. I wish there were more people so little impulsive. If Mr. Millar would only take a lesson from him and would be guided by him he would not get so deep as he is likely to get. To come to Captain Highman. Captain Highman has stated the officers were denied the right to assemble. Who denied them the right to assemble? Who denied them the right to associate? They are welcome to have their association. They have, I suppose, made their mind up about it. I now think it is not good for them to be banded together with others, and that they have seen this. The few that are left have got a union, but they have no ships, and what is the good of a union without ships? We are not putting any embargo on their coming back; we are willing to take them back. Captain Highman has made a statement in the papers that these men were worked for thirty-six hours at a stretch. He has discounted this statement considerably since he came here. I should like to know who the men are that could do it. And if they could do it, where is the employer who would let them? I have investigated the matter myself. We are quite prepared to have fault found with our administration, and to profit by it. If we did not hearken to faults we should never improve our administration. I asked the men whether there was anything in this statement. They said they had had long hours at Lyttelton, but they admitted that when they went out of port the captain took the first watch. I asked them whether they could not do something among themselves to prevent these