

through any spite against you; but they will not go back with my sanction, anyhow, until we have come to a fair understanding over this dispute. If the company once agree that each society has perfect freedom to do what it likes outside their contract, I have no doubt the men would go back to-morrow. You say you have an unlimited quantity of officers and cooks and stewards. The quantity I will not deny, the quality I do.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: The quality are old hands come back again.

*Mr. Millar*: The quality, sir, are men dismissed for drunkenness, and men too old for the service. One man taken was a cockatoo, and he came and showed me certificates.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: I will make a denial of what he is saying. We have plenty of our old and best hands wanting to come back to us now.

*Mr. Millar*: All I have to say is this: I can mention men dismissed from your company—men you have refused, and if you desire me to give their names before the members of the Conference I will do so. I do not know what applications you have from the officers; I am talking about the quality of the officers you have at present at work, not those who may hereafter go to work. I am confident the officers would be quite prepared to go back to work to-morrow if they got the opportunity. If the vessels are running with competent men, and everything is satisfactory, there can be no necessity for any of our men. But one thing is passing strange. If the vessels are running with such competent men, how is it when they get into port—especially in the case of the Sydney boats—that they require a testimonial to be given to the captain for his great abilities shown in working the vessel under trying circumstances? If the men are thoroughly competent and know their work, where can the trying circumstances for the officers be? In my humble opinion these testimonials must be manufactured wholesale in Sydney and passed on board ship ready for signature before they come here. We never heard anything of this sort in the old days. And the company is supposed to have a regulation to the effect that no man shall receive a testimonial unless it comes from the office direct: it must be signed in the office; yet we see these cases mentioned in the papers where a captain or steward has received a presentation “owing to the trying circumstances.” There must be “something rotten in the state of Denmark” for these testimonials to be required. Now, I do not know, gentlemen, but in my humble opinion the bond which the Shipowners’ Association agreed to sign expired on the 1st October. My information may not be correct or it may be correct; but I believe that each individual company is perfectly free to do what they like just now, and I expect advices shortly from the other side as to what the Union Company is going to do.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: Your information is all wrong.

*Mr. Millar*: Of course it may be. I may have been led astray from beginning to end. I am in constant communication, and possibly I may have been all wrong from beginning to end, as I have said. If so, we shall have to be the sufferers. Mr. McLean also stated that, as far as the directors of the Union Steamship Company were aware, the Grey Valley Coal Company had not refused to give them coal. Now, I should just like to ask Mr. McLean to answer if it never struck him or his directors as a peculiar thing that their boats should leave the Grey one after the other without any coal without an inquiry into the cause of it. There were a dozen boats left Greymouth belonging to the Union Steamship Company without an ounce of coal.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: These are exaggerated statements. There were not a dozen altogether that left Greymouth since the strike, and we then had plenty of coal at Westport.

*Mr. Millar*: But they left the Grey without coal, Mr. McLean.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: Only two or three boats. We have coal at Westport. These statements are so exaggerated that I shall take no further notice of them.

*Mr. Millar*: All I have to say is this: If they are exaggerated, I should like Mr. McLean to deny them.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: So I do.

*Mr. Millar*: One by one—not in a general statement. I am making a statement I am prepared to substantiate, and, if Mr. McLean says it is wrong and wants a proof, I have the Greymouth people here and will ask them to name the boats which have gone in and out of Greymouth since the dispute took place. Mr. Boase, can you tell me how many boats have gone in and out of Greymouth?

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: I am not going to take notice of any statements made after this. I shall allow Mr. Millar to make any statement he pleases.

*Mr. Millar*: I am only making them because you made certain statements. I am only doing it in self-defence. I feel bound to defend our action, and I say it seems passing strange that your boats should have gone in and out of Greymouth—perhaps half a dozen or more—without coal, and the directors did not know why. Then, as to the rates of passage-money. Of course that has nothing to do with us, but I can say, before this dispute took place on the other side I travelled from Melbourne to Sydney in the “Burrumbeet” for £3 15s. It was almost as good as the Union Company—four days’ steaming, and the same attendance as the Union Steamship Company gives, for £3 15s.; and I had to pay £3 from Lyttelton to Wellington, which was thirty-four hours’ steam, though if you go in one of the fast boats you do it in twenty-five hours. I do not see, therefore, when you come to quote fares, that our fares in New Zealand are remarkably cheap, although I do not mean to say they are extortionate.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: It is a mistake.

*Mr. Millar*: I make it, Mr. McLean, as a distinct assertion, and it can be borne out by any person who likes. Two years ago, at the time of the Melbourne Exhibition—when there were no excursion fares—I travelled from Melbourne to Sydney in the “Burrumbeet” with a return ticket for £3 15s. That was before the competition commenced. Latterly it has been £1. Before the strike you could go from Brisbane to Sydney for £1, and from Melbourne to Sydney for £1. They were cutting each other’s throats, and there is no reason why we should bear the brunt of it. Then, there is another matter which I certainly intend to say more about. There has been