

morning. As to the Employers' Union, I think, myself, that it would have been all the better had there been such a union for some time past, because where there is a strict employers' union there is always less friction. In the North of England there is a strong employers' association, which does more business than that of the whole of New Zealand put together; and there is also a strong association of men. A Board of Conciliation has been formed, and there has scarcely been a dispute during the whole time of its existence—the only time there was a dispute was when the employers tried to break away from the Board of Conciliation; the result being that there is a perfect guarantee for the carrying-on of the business of the associations. And in the coal trade in the North of England this principle has always been found to work in a first-class manner. Before associations were formed in this way there were always these strikes, because there was never any one to control them. As to "the flower of the labour of New Zealand," I do not wish to say anything about that further than that I see from a statement in the paper that a certain quantity of the "flower of New Zealand" is going to be sent to the mines, and it will take a good deal of Pears's soap to bring them back to the flower after they have worked a few months in the mines.—(Laughter.)—In regard to the statement of Mr. McLean as to the benefit conferred on the West Coast—on Greymouth and the Grey Valley—since the taking-over of these mines, I may say that in the first six months of 1888, before the transaction, we had 250 men employed in hewing coal; but in the corresponding six months of 1889, after the company had taken possession and was working the mine, we had 155 employed in hewing coal.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: I explained that.

*Mr. Ansell*: I am taking the normal period, and all I can say is that the number of men has gone on declining. And at the time I am speaking about, July, 1889, we had no less than sixty hewers less; and you know very well what that means. And we have had to pay passages for other men going away. And I am quite sure, if everything was put into working-order to-morrow, a large portion of the population would have to leave Greymouth because the mines are not in the condition for the employment of the men there are there.

*Mr. Hoban*: I just want to say that I think Mr. Millar's suggestion a very good one indeed. We might discuss this matter until doomsday, and then arrive at nothing definite. If the Hon. George McLean thought it desirable, it would, I think, be better for this Conference to appoint three or four from their number now we have heard both sides of the question, and try to arrive at some basis of settlement. Mr. Millar's is a very good suggestion, and I should like to see it carried out. I would like to know Mr. McLean's opinion about the matter—whether he agrees with the suggestion. He must see for himself that while we are all talking one after another there is no basis of settlement being arrived at one way or the other. There is no necessity to discuss the matters in dispute at any further length now, and the sooner we adopt the suggestion of Mr. Millar, if agreeable to Mr. McLean, the better.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: Mr. Millar has made one condition which is nothing in substance, but which I could not agree with, and that is as to the officers' affiliation. There is no affiliation now, because the old association has gone, and the other one does not want to affiliate with anybody. The old association is done for now, and a superior association takes its place; and if that point is made a positive thing it would be no good in my meeting them. I shall be very glad to meet and discuss the whole matter with anybody; but it is no good if you meet and discuss and lay down certain things. It is as well to be plain: if you want conference it should not be conditional. If you want conditions, what is the use of the Conference?—(Hear, hear.)—It is no use with all these grand conditions he makes.

*Mr. R. P. Johnson*: I would say that when, on the one hand, this morning, Mr. McLean asked in the most perfect good faith, "What are we to do, under a certain aspect of affairs, with the two thousand men in our employ?" there can be no doubt he laid himself open to certain suggestions being made to him. And I gather from that that there was an evident desire on the part of the Hon. Mr. McLean to meet this Conference, or any portion of it that may be delegated to meet him, in a friendly and conciliatory spirit. I take your remarks, sir, as an indication of that; and one cannot help coupling that statement with Mr. Millar's, and wondering how it would be if the common-sense of both parties could come together and see if some arrangement could not be come to in the face of such willingness on both sides. Mr. Millar's statement was more emphatic and clearer than Mr. McLean's indicated willingness, for Mr. Millar says, "I shall be very glad indeed to meet Mr. McLean and discuss the matter before he goes away—at the end of this sitting even—and come to some basis of settlement." Mr. McLean's remark on the one side and Mr. Millar's on the other seem to make up the shell of the nut, but the kernel is the settlement, and from the two statements made to-day there seems to me to be some of the kernel likely to be got at. I hope from this, sir, that we shall have what is generally shown in such cases, the idea of a compromise; and that compromise had much better be effected *in camera* than in a meeting of this kind, with reporters present. And I say that, in the interests of humanity, in the interests of the trades of the country, would it not be better for some one to name a delegation from this Conference to meet Mr. McLean and try to arrive at some basis of settlement?

*Mr. Meyer*: On the understanding that both sides may be able to come to some conclusion in the matter, I wish to move that Messrs. Winter, Sandford, Millar, Lomas, and Fisher be appointed a deputation to confer with the Hon. Mr. McLean, and to try and come to some arrangement between themselves and report to this meeting.

*Mr. R. P. Johnson*: I shall be happy to second that, as it was exactly what I was trying to arrive at.

*Mr. F. C. Millar*: I think five too many, and that it would be better to appoint only three as a deputation. Perhaps Mr. Meyer would be willing to alter his proposition to that effect.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: I would suggest that if there is to be anything of this sort you should select some impartial men outside the Maritime Council, because if some impartial men are appointed it will be better.