

they declined to do that, they tried to settle the matter themselves, and did so, and were treated by the shipowners with disdain after they returned. To say that the wharf-labourers' dispute had anything to do with this is I think altogether wrong. The whole thing was settled, and the wharf-labourers were working amicably at the time, although I admit they kicked their traces; but they were brought to their bearings, partly through their officers and partly through the Conference, and induced to go back to work. They can disabuse their minds of the idea that the wharf-labourers had anything to do with it here. I say the wharf-labourers had nothing to do with this dispute at the commencement. I believe the Union Steamship Company did pay 2s. 2d. per ton for discharging, and they paid 2s. 3d. in one instance; but Mr. McLean should have told you that they also paid as low as 10½d. The minimum and maximum rates paid should have been given.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: I know of no case where they have been paid 10d. for many a day unless it was a few tons. If you take the whole lot it is not 10d.

*Mr. Millar*: You quoted the maximum sum you paid in the "Monowai;" I am quoting the minimum sum, 10½d., paid in the case of the "Wakatipu."

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: A few bags.

*Mr. Millar*: If you strike the average between the two you could put it down at a cost of 1s. 6d. per ton.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: It is more than that, a good deal.

*Mr. Millar*: Well, that is just my own idea. Then, Mr. McLean says that the Seamen's Union submitted "slate" proposals, giving you to understand, as I take it, that they had submitted "slate" proposals before this dispute took place. But, gentlemen, they did nothing of the sort: the "slate" proposals have been submitted since the dispute took place—a fortnight afterwards—and the men submitted them saying that the whole of the bodies who had any demand to make would make it now, so that there should be no future disputes; and, whatever settlement was arrived at on those "slate" proposals, an agreement should be signed for three or five years, so that there should be confidence in the future with both workers and employers, and that there should be no deviation from those proposals. Those were the proposals submitted by the Maritime Council of New South Wales, representing the demands of the five maritime bodies, who were all desirous, as the shipowners professed to be, of having a settlement. Mind you, they did not say to the shipowners, "These are our proposals: we will have them or nothing;" but they said, "These are our proposals: we submit them to you, and we want a conference upon them, and we will discuss them upon their merits. If we cannot make a case of it we will withdraw from it. But we want you and the public to listen to our argument in support of those proposals." But the shipowners would not agree to it. Why? We can only believe that they were afraid to come and appear before the public. We are not afraid to do it; and if uneducated men such as we are supposed to be are not afraid, and all the brain-power of Australia is afraid, to come forward and debate upon it, then they have a poor case.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: I give an emphatic denial to that.

*Mr. Millar*: I say that since these "slate" proposals were submitted there has been no conference; they have refused a conference upon those proposals submitted to them.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: Would Mr. Millar stand up here and say that Messrs. Gibb and Belcher did not represent the Seamen's Union at the Conference, or that after the Conference was over they said the Seamen's Union insisted on their demands?

*Mr. Millar*: Mr. McLean is labouring under a delusion. He is confusing the seamen's demands with the "slate" proposals, which, as I am pointing out, are the proposals of five amalgamated bodies since the dispute. The demands of the Seamen's Union were put forward before this dispute, and the seamen met the shipowners in conference, and after discussing everything they had come to a mutual agreement on all points except the hours of labour. The men wanted eight hours, but this the shipowners declined to accede to, saying the demand meant ruination, and they asked our delegates to reconsider the question. This they did, and submitted a fresh rule for twelve hours. Then the shipowners asked for two days to consider the question, and they agreed to meet on the Saturday and have a definite reply. Our delegates went to receive the reply to the amended rule for twelve hours instead of eight; but, instead of getting this, they were handed their copy of the rules previously submitted, with six of the rules scratched out which the shipowners had previously agreed to, and told that they declined to discuss the matter further. If that is not a distinct dismissal, I have yet to learn what it is. Had the shipowners said, "We cannot agree to give you twelve hours a day," the seamen were prepared to go further into it, and in all probability waive the point altogether. The shipowners, however, declined to meet us, and we had no opportunity of discussing the matter further; and we then, as Mr. McLean says, put the matter before our members for the purpose of taking a ballot as to whether they would be prepared to insist on those demands. They were asked whether they wanted those things or not, and if they did not want them they had to say No, and then no strike would take place; but if a substantial majority insisted upon them we were to hold them to their word. To say that because we were taking a ballot there was to be a strike is begging the question, as there was as much chance of a majority against it as in favour of it. Mr. McLean says the shipowners took no active steps in the matter, and we admit that; but they remained passive, having stated from the first that they intended to remain passive and throw the onus of taking any action on the men. Remaining passive means that, if you make a demand and a man says he will not grant it, you cannot put your hand in his pocket and take the money out. There are two courses open to an employé—either he must submit to the dictation of his employer or leave his employment. There was no medium course, because they declined to discuss it in any shape or form, and the only option left to the officers was to come out or stay where they were. The statement that they have always been fairly dealt with can be refuted in a few moments. I would point out that five years ago a Marine Officers' Association was formed in Victoria and in New Zealand. The Victorian one went ahead, and they agreed to pay a rate of wages to those officers which was agreed upon. Everything went