

along swimmingly for a couple of months, until by-and-by the shipowners called one officer after another into their offices and said, "We cannot afford to pay these wages, and you must give us a rebate of £2 per month upon the rate you have signed for"—that is, that, though they signed on the articles for £15 a month, they only received £13, while giving a receipt for £15. This is what the shipowners did in the whole of the officers in Victoria five years ago.

*Hon. Mr. McLean* took exception to this statement.

*Mr. Millar*: I am prepared to prove that such is the case. I am prepared to submit documentary evidence that they did so. They called the officers into their offices and told them that if they did not take £2 per month less they must go; and that is what broke the association up. And when the Marine Association here, of which I am a member, was formed, did not the Union Steamship Company, Mr. McLean, issue a circular to their officers demanding to know whether they belonged to the association? and is that circular not now in print, and in the possession of your masters? Only two months ago one of your masters told me that he would not join the new association before that circular was withdrawn. I interviewed Mr. J. Mills on the matter, and he said he was not aware that the circular was in force.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: There was no objection to their joining the association without affiliating.

*Mr. Millar*: I am talking now about the association which had attained considerable strength before the Union Company knew anything about it.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: No.

*Mr. Millar*: I understand it did, sir. Anyhow, I am just trying to point out what the men can expect if they throw themselves on the mercy of their employers. I was a member of the old association, and still have my book. That association did not come to a head from the fact of the Union Steamship Company's officers being afraid or intimidated too much to join it. Then, you said in your statement, sir, that the management of the boats had been taken completely out of your hands, and at the same time you tell us or lead us to believe that the management was taken out of your hands through the continued aggressiveness of the union. Having, sir, admitted that the aggressiveness of the union has taken the management out of your hands, I can show you, I think, you have cut the ground from underneath your feet in saying that the demands of the union have been exorbitant, because I think it is fully recognised on all sides that the Union Company is one of the best-managed companies in the world. It has increased its dividends from 6 to 8 per cent., with a bonus in good years; and that has been done under the management of the unions. And, having admitted that, I do not think there is any fault to find with them. I do not know of any company that can do better. We have provided one of the finest fleets in the world, one of the finest bodies of men, and returned 8 per cent for the shareholders—not a bad record for the unions. Now, sir, in regard to the Union Company always being good to the men before the association was formed, I never was in that company's employment, but, from what the men have told me, it used to be a common thing in Dunedin for them to arrive on a Saturday night in Port Chalmers, land their wool, go up to Dunedin, load, go to the Molyneux, discharge the cargo on the banks of the river on the Sunday, and go to Dunedin in the morning.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: The Union Company did not trade to the Molyneux that I know of.

*Mr. Millar*: I am taking what was the nucleus of the present Union Steamship Company—namely, the old Harbour Board. They were the nucleus of the Union Steamship Company, and that was their practice at that time. We have the undeniable fact that the Union Steamship Company had a strike because they refused to give the men £7 per month and eight hours. That is on record—that at the formation of the Seamen's Union there was a strike, and the company attempted to fight the seamen, but ultimately granted what they requested. Since that time, I think, they have had very few troubles with the Union Steamship Company. I have no personal feeling against that company, not the slightest. I have worked in complete harmony with them since I have held office, and am prepared to work in complete harmony with them to-morrow, or as soon as this dispute is settled. I admit that they have treated the men fairly, and that they have been paid fairly well. I have never denied the fact; but, at the same time, they would have to go a long way before they got a body of men who would do their work so satisfactorily as these men have who are now concerned in this dispute. Consequently, as far as this is concerned, they are even; there is no obligation on either side, and neither side is indebted to the other. Then, Mr. McLean brought in the question of the settlement of the Northern Company's affair, and told you that we had committed a distinct breach of faith. I deny that *in toto*. Had I thought this matter would have cropped up here I should have produced the written agreement signed by Mr. J. Mills, Captain Birne, and myself in the presence of Mr. Twopeny, editor of the *Otago Daily Times*. The whole stumblingblock had been the retention of the men by the company. If we had desired to admit these men into the union the thing would have been settled months before it was. We declined, however, *in toto* to admit the men into the union; but we agreed that we would make those men who had been in the service of the Northern Company eligible for the Seamen's Union, and we guaranteed that the executive and the head offices of the various branches would use their influence to get those men into the union; and this, I maintain, we honestly carried out. We told them distinctly that five men of our union who had seceded from the ranks would never be admitted to the union again, and Mr. Mills said he could not expect anything else, as men who could sell their fellow-men were not worthy of it.

*Hon. Mr. McLean*: Did ever he say that? I think it very improbable.

*Mr. Millar*: Yes. He said he was not going to fight for them at all; but he said the other men were entitled to go into the society, and I pledged my word to him that we would use our influence to get them in. The mode of election in the Seamen's Union is by ballot. Every man receives two balls, a black and a white one, when a candidate is brought up, and he can vote for or against, and no one knows how he votes. Some have got in and some have not. The men we objected to were the men who stole the jewellery, and we refused to have those men in the society. As to whether we have ever tried to run in opposition to the Union Steamship Company