

unions had for a long time to struggle against public opinion in many cases. It was the vital principle of unionism to combine for the improvement of labour as well as for the benefit of the men. Why should a unionist, who had contributed, perhaps, £10 to the support of his union, be asked to work alongside a man who never contributed a penny for the benefit of his trade; and was it reasonable to expect that in the case of two men working side by side under the conditions set forth by the Employers' Association, whilst one man (non-unionist), was not contributing to a union, the other (unionist) was going to pay in to a society which had for its object the keeping-up of the wages and social condition of his craft? The result of this Conference must prove a disappointment to the whole country. If Mr. McLean would meet the proposed basis of settlement only half-way there was still a hope that a settlement might be arrived at. If, however, he should take up the extreme position his words intimated, public opinion would come round to the unions. But that would take time, and much suffering might exist between that time and the present. The present time was therefore the proper time for a settlement. If there should be no settlement there was no escape from the conclusion that the Union Company had in view for its object the ruin of the unions.

*Mr. Elwines* could not allow the present attempt at a settlement to go forth without saying something as to the basis of agreement proposed. Hitherto he had been silent; but it was now time to speak. He believed the Union Company took up their position for the purpose of crushing unionism—that they were going to stem the tide which had now rolled on for fifty years. At first unions used to meet in secret: they might meet in secret still. As far back as thirty years ago he worked with a society which allowed no member to work with a non-union man. Did the employers think they could stop the tide that rolled on the sea shore? If they did they were mistaken. Neither could they stop the tide of humanity. Humanity would remain humanity to the end, and it must progress as the condition of its existence. If wrong means were taken to stop its progress its course would be all the more rapid. He disclaimed the reputation of a prophet; but he believed it would grow with still greater strength in New Zealand than before this struggle took place. One effect of it was to bring in labour from the country places. This would show those who knew nothing about it before what unionism in the towns really was, and how it could benefit the working-class. Thus, instead of crushing the unions, the Union Company would rather enlarge their liberty. He was, therefore, not sorry, regarding the matter from this point, that Mr. McLean had arrived at such a decision, though he would have liked to see the dispute settled. Even if men had to work with non-unionists there must be reaction, and that ere long. After so many years of working, after doing so much good work, was it likely that unionism would abandon its position without a struggle at some future time for the re-establishment of its claims? If all the working-men of New Zealand knew how good a thing unionism was they would cherish it in their hearts. If employers understood how beneficial it was to them they would not be so blind to their own interests as to attempt to do away with it.

*Mr. Ansell* thought the Union Company would not hear reason. They had procured a lot of labourers by denuding the agricultural districts, which would require the services of these men in the shearing and harvest seasons, and these men would only increase the difficulty that must take place whenever the company should choose to reduce their present hands. Even the Chinamen despised these men who were doing so much to injure the working-class, for when he (the Chinaman) was offered employment to discharge ships he said, "No; I no blackleg; I am Englishman." For they (the company) had gone to pick Chinese up from the Chinese quarter to discharge their ships. He wished to defend Mr. Millar from the attacks which had been made upon him by the Press. Mr. Millar had not been the sole or contributing cause of the strike, nor had he had the sole control of the action taken by the Maritime Council. He hoped the Press would take notice of this statement of his. He knew—everybody knew—that unionism had done a great deal for the Union Company. If both sides to the late dispute had been stronger a settlement would have been more likely. There had been considerable friction; but if there had been a sincere desire for a settlement on the part of the company, and a wish to adjust the fair claims of the unions, there would have been no friction. With regard to union men working with non-union men, candidly he must say that he would not go back to the place he came from and tell them there that he had in this Conference agreed that the members of unions should work with non-union labour; and he believed the time was not far distant when non-union men would find to their cost that they have wronged themselves as well as their fellow-workmen of the unions; for no man shortly, whatever his condition may be, would be able to live in this world without combining. The capitalist was combining everywhere to get labour at the cheapest rate, and cheap labour meant injury to the competent worker. It appeared to him as if capital and the Government were working together. Thirty policemen had been sent to the West Coast, where there was no necessity for them, unless it was intended to provoke a collision. He still hoped the Union Company and the other employers of labour would reconsider the whole question. Secret societies had been the curse of the world in the past. Did capitalists wish to expose this young colony for the future to that curse? The moment physical power was employed every one knew what the consequences would be. God forbid that it ever should be so. He hoped that the hand of friendship would still be extended by both employers and employed; that they could always say to each other, "Come, let us gather round this table, and discuss and settle all our differences." Let them do right by each other, and if capital be wrong let capital give way; if labour be wrong let labour do the same.

*The Chairman*: There were certain things in Mr. Ansell's speech of a somewhat personal nature. Personally, I indorse his views upon the general questions he has been discussing. I would ask the members of the Conference in their remarks not to go outside the proper subject which is before them—whether the basis of arrangement which is now proposed is a fair and reasonable way of settling this dispute.

*Mr. Winter* did not think it was necessary to draw out that discussion to any length. Every