

member of the Conference had heard Mr. McLean. Speaking on behalf of the railway societies, he would like it to be understood, as far as not working with unionists was concerned, his society could not insist on it were they to pass any resolution on the subject. All the societies were wishing to enforce that rule, but that would not include the railway unions. He felt extremely sorry that an amicable arrangement had not been arrived at. He had hoped that they were gradually working towards a settlement, and he was exceedingly sorry when he heard that a settlement had been postponed. He believed that both sides had been deviating from the true issues before the Conference until neither one could help the other, capital going in one direction and labour in the other. The best thing now was to try and see the point where the parting took place. Any retrograde step would be bad for the prospect of settlement. If both sides would earnestly set themselves to discover where the actual point of separation was they would do good. The Conference proposed, in effect, that the labour unions shall be thrown open to all competent men. That was a concession. Would Mr. McLean and the company ask the labour unions to stultify themselves? But Mr. McLean told the Conference that the proposed basis of arrangement implied a compulsion upon the men to join the union. It was scarcely possible to interpret it in that light: it did not follow from what the basis of agreement contained. But all men and societies must be more or less restricted by their surroundings. Even if it were as Mr. McLean put it, it would be urging men for their good, and therefore a kindly act. If only some common standpoint could be found upon which the two sides could agree there was reason to believe that a settlement was even yet practicable. He (Mr. Winter) believed that public opinion would be favourable to the acceptance of the basis proposed. The continuance of an uncertain state of things would be sure to entail much suffering. It was to be hoped, therefore, Mr. McLean would not resolve to decline the proposals now made. From whatever point looked at, the present condition of the question between labour and capital was leading to deplorable results. He observed that the papers had quoted the expression "irresistible" used by him as if it had some extraordinary hidden meaning. It was never contemplated in the sense of any resistance being made to law or good order or the public peace. It was merely intended that the claims of unionism were so evident and so strong that they would in the end prevail in spite of opposition.

*Hon. Mr. McLean:* It is, perhaps, out of place for me to be here now. If all the speeches delivered were like the last one I could not complain. But I see it is evident we are likely to have a repetition of the attack on the Union Company. The first day all the attack was on the Union Company. Now we are going to have a repetition of that. I do not think it would be wise for me to remain. When an agreement is not come to on occasions such as this, the usual thing is to give a vote of thanks to the Chairman, and that terminates the discussion. After that you could have any further meeting among yourselves if you thought proper. However, I came here in good faith. If you wish me to stay for any particular object that may do good I will stay; or, if you wish, I will leave. You can then have a free debate. I shall be, in a sense, out of court. If this debate is to continue, I will withdraw after a few words. If it is not to continue, then I will propose a vote of thanks to the Chairman. The objection I have is that continual misrepresentations are being made about the company I represent. It is well known that objection was made to my coming here. The Union Company are going on with their business, and are not going to inquire as to whether men are union men or non-union men. I must again assert that we had no say in this dispute; our men were taken away from us. It may be said that the men we have are non-union men. Of course they are. But I again affirm that we never lifted a finger to hurt unionism. All this we hear about Chinamen being employed by us is a pure fabrication. We have plenty of men without having to employ Chinamen. I might perhaps tell you that two hundred Maoris were pressed on us very strongly for employment, but we declined to take them into our service. I am glad of the opportunity to refute this. All this talk about union men not being able to work with non-union men is absurd. Mr. Winter has just told us that in his society—which is one of the largest in New Zealand, and is also affiliated with the Maritime Council—they must, in the nature of things, work with non-unionists.

*Mr. Boase* did not think that Mr. McLean wished to crush the unions, but the position he had taken up would lead to that result. He knew that unions were formed for the purpose not only of keeping up the proper standard of wage, but for the purpose of organizing labour and skill for the benefit of the particular trade to which the members belonged. Those who had been paying for a considerable time into the union were fairly entitled to its benefit. How could they be said to be entitled to the benefit of a union who contributed nothing to its support? The *bona fide* contributors to a union would never consent to being placed on an equality with persons outside who paid nothing, and were probably not efficient workmen. A better lot of working-men could not be found anywhere than those who had been in the employment of the Union Company. They would all rejoice to go back, but they wanted to go back on honourable terms. They were willing to yield if the company would yield a little. Throughout the country it was admitted that whenever this matter was settled it could only be settled by some yielding on both sides.

*Mr. F. C. Millar* thought there was one point which must weigh with capitalists a good deal—they were all losing money; their business was going away from them. If they considered a little they would remember that it was through the workmen trained by the unions that they were able to turn out such good work. Being able to turn out good work, they succeeded in business, increased their plant, and extended their operations. Yet these were the very men who were now trying to crush unionism. Hence it was that the unions must now act in self-defence.

*Mr. Seymour:* Mr. McLean has told this Conference that he was pledged to these men now in his employment. He questioned whether there was a law which obliged a man or company to keep in their employment men who were incompetent to do the work for which they had been engaged. A report which he held in his hand stated that 1s. 1½d. was paid for what 7½d. was paid before the strike. This showed the new men were incompetent as compared with those men who had gone out.