

will yet come out of this strike, although there is a great deal of trouble and suffering caused by it. But it did not happen here; it came to New Zealand through unfortunate circumstances, and I think, myself, that the thing might now be allowed to die out. You have this good to come out of it: that the unions will know how to frame their constitutions so as to avoid difficulties in future. You have also employers' associations formed throughout New Zealand, which will be of considerable benefit even to the unions, for you will be able to meet on a common platform. It is contended for the unions that they are good to equalise wages. There are good men in unions and there are bad men in unions; in employers' associations the same. But you will have genuine men on both sides clubbing together to effect good and keep all these objectionable people in the right course. This Conference will do good, in my opinion, in that way. Although it is of little use further discussing this matter, I am obliged to you all for the manner in which you have treated me, and for the consideration and courtesy you have shown towards me. I hope now that, whatever may come, we shall all leave as good friends as when we started.—(Applause.)

*Mr. J. A. Millar:* I can see by the terms of this basis of agreement that the delegates have done everything that was possible for them to do towards a compromise short of deserting the whole cause. I think I indorse the opinion of the delegates here assembled when I say that it is the determination of the unions not to work with non-union men. That was what I thought when I came to the Conference, and it is what I think now. We came here prepared to give way a little, in the hope that the employers would give way a little, and that so we might arrive at a settlement of the dispute. I have received a letter from the Trades and Labour Council of Auckland, in which they say it is the opinion of twenty-four societies, representing eight thousand men, that they will not give way on this question of union men not working with non-union men, and I am instructed not to give way on this point. You see, therefore, it is quite evident that the unions are firm on this point. The reason we do not give way in this matter has been already explained to you. I have simply to point out to you that the employers who are taking up the position which Mr. McLean, who represents them here, has taken up, are taking up an aggressive position. Almost every trade in the colony is working under these rules which the employers, who are now making so much noise about their determination, are objecting to. Nine-tenths of the trades have been organized upon the principle that union labour shall not work with non-union labour. It has been a recognised principle throughout the country. The employers have not been injured but benefited. They have not objected when the system was in full work, and I say again that the position they are taking up now is an aggressive position. It cannot be anything else, seeing that they are endeavouring to force the men out of the unions. Mr. McLean says this proposed agreement is going back to the old position. He has admitted that his company worked well with the unions up till then. His attitude now shows that he is taking up an aggressive position. I contend that the labour party are now placed on the defensive, whatever their position may have been in the past. He says we ought to confess our fault, because we have all our faults. I have yet to see where our fault lies. We were forced into the position which we had to take up. If Mr. McLean can show us this fault there is no man more willing than myself to declare that it is a fault. Up to the present I have not seen it. He objects to go back to the old position. This, as I have said, shows that his position must be aggressive. I do not think that a large body of men can be said to be wrong in taking up a defensive position, whatever may be said about an aggressive position. He says the proposed agreement is forcing the employers to compel their employes to join the unions. I do not know that there need be any forcing in the matter. I am not aware that the directors of the Union Company ever interfere with the men. They may with the officers; but, so far as the men—the cooks and stewards—are concerned, it is the head of a department that has to do with them. Those are the individuals who know where the best men are to be found. The men whom they select would be taken on at once. Every person knows that there are such things as unions, where the most competent men in their respective trades are to be found. If a man wants employment he tries to get into a union. Mr. McLean tells us the Union Company are sailing their ships. We admit it. It does not annoy me. I do not know anything about their sailing; we cannot stop their sailing, and do not want to do so. By-and-by, perhaps, we may be able to meet the employers on another footing altogether. It would almost seem as if neither side had quite enough of this business yet. The time will never come when I will sign for a non-union and a union man to work together—I will leave the country first. The men may go back if they please, but they will never go back with my sanction. Possibly the employers may complete their victory by some further act of aggression; but I think their next balance-sheet will show that it is the dearest victory they ever bought in their lives. This struggle is likely to do the men good; it will show that the true object of the employers is to crush unionism. But I can tell them that the time is not far off when the men they are employing now will have their union. The union is necessary for the protection of labour. Even some of these men, I am informed, struck the other day because they did not get plum-pudding. The employer may find that they will have more trouble with their new men than ever they had with their old men. Possibly in the course of a couple of months we may come to an agreement. I think it is a pity we cannot agree to this now. If this matter had been settled it is possible the whole of the societies all over the country would be satisfied. I can only say that we have done our best to find a basis of agreement. We have given way a lot. It is for the employers now to give something. We have agreed that all competent men shall be admitted to the union upon paying the ordinary entrance-fee. We do not care to have incompetent men who go "blacklegging" round the country in our societies. Whatever loss there has been to the country, I think the cause of it is on the side of the employers. I cannot say anything else.

*Mr. Sandford:* I think a word is due to the delegates here assembled. It was no doubt agreed that the basis of settlement which has been read should be kept secret until Mr. McLean and ourselves had agreed to a basis which we were prepared to submit to each of our principals. Seeing that we have failed to come to any agreement with Mr. McLean as to the main principle, I think it is only right