

that this basis of agreement should be made public. He might have said, "I decline to settle." We might have said the same thing, and no one would be the wiser as to the grounds upon which we failed to come to terms, or the proposals for a basis of settlement which we were prepared to accept. I think the Conference will recognise that it is due to the delegates, and due to Mr. McLean himself, that our principals should know exactly what the basis is, and be in a position to judge whether or not there has been a fair and reasonable compromise proposed. I think the public will come to the conclusion that we have fairly tried to settle this matter. The capitalist party have come to a conclusion which, if maintained, is short of nothing but unconditional surrender. They may think they have effected the defeat of the labour party, but they may be assured that such is not the case. If ever human nature is forced on to its knees it immediately sets to work to regain its position. Human nature is still alive in unionist breasts. If the capitalists were in a position to-morrow to force unionism on to its knees and demand their own terms, although unionists are now scattered, they will at once commence preparations for another conflict—a conflict which in its results may be even more disastrous than this, because they will have greater financial power. I pointed out to a member of the Government recently that if the working-men should be treated unfairly, and driven to extremity by injustice done to their unions, there would grow up a tendency to secret societies. That is a tendency which, I believe, is even now beginning to take hold of working-men, and if such a tendency should be confirmed it will introduce a dangerous element into unionism which at present is absent. I give here a statement which I would be prepared to make on the public platform. I may wrong them, but I believe this idea has obtained some form and substance, not amongst the leaders of unionism, be it understood, but in the rank and file there is a small section which will gravitate towards secret societies in such circumstances as I have indicated. To provoke the formation of such societies constitutes an ultimate danger which, were complete justice done now, could be avoided.

*Mr. Parker* felt extremely sorry that the deliberations of the Conference had terminated in the manner that they had. He had strong hope that some settlement would have been arrived at—a settlement by which the condition of labour in the colony would be placed on a better footing than it was at the present time. He had hoped to return to his home the bearer of good news. He thought that the Hon. Mr. McLean might have conceded something to the position into which this struggle had got. He (*Mr. Parker*) was willing to stop in Wellington another week or fortnight to see if something definite could be arrived at.

*Mr. Hoban* regretted very much that the Conference should have come to a termination without any settlement. *Mr. McLean* had admitted that his company had worked well with union men. *Mr. McLean* bore testimony to the good work the union had done in the past. They accepted the position that union men would not work with non-union men. Why did they object to this principle now? No doubt boards of conciliation would be established in time. It was quite true that, if the employers succeeded in suppressing the unions, there was a probability that secret societies in some form or other would be started. It might be true that the Union Company's employment provided two thousand persons with a living, but that fact was no argument against unionism. Judging by what had happened, it appeared that the real object of the Union Company was to do away with unionism and bring cheap labour into the market. The Conference had conceded certain points, the company had conceded nothing. The employers were not anxious for a settlement. Their object rather seemed to put it off as long as possible. They were trying to crush the bone and sinew of the country. But the employers might depend upon it they would not succeed in suppressing whatever was just and right in the unions, which would, in the future, with redoubled energy, strengthen themselves.

*Mr. Mills* thought the time had now come when outside unionists should give expression to their opinions. The outside land unions had refrained from taking any part in the discussion, under the impression that by keeping out of it there would be a saving of time. The maritime bodies had expressed their opinion, and *Mr. McLean* had spoken for the Union Company. He believed the delegates had done everything that was possible to bring about an arrangement. Now, he thought all the representatives of unions should express their views. He (*Mr. Mills*) represented the New Zealand Typographical Association—an association whose members had always been in the van of unionism—and he was sent to the Conference as a unionist printer to give his voice in maintaining unionism; and in this standing he might say that the majority of the printers of our colony were with the leaders of this strike. It was not right that they should be silent on such an important occasion as the present. *Mr. McLean* had told them about advising a young friend of his to the effect that the first thing to be done was to have his name put on the books of the union. He was certainly then in sympathy with unionism. He at that time recognised the right of combination so far as the workmen were concerned. Under the old unionism the workmen were poorly off indeed; but under the new unionism labour combination could never be stamped out, as frequently happened in former days. The principle of unionism would go on progressing in spite of anything the Union Company or any other opposition could say or do against it. Opposition must only bring it more strongly to the front, for the new unionism had been found to be a benefit to society at large. Formerly, under old trades unionism, workers were compromised by the drinking habits, but with better combination and higher motives the new unionism had been introduced, with the result that thrift and sobriety became a feature in the conducting of the unions, and intemperance was strongly discountenanced. Where a man now came to his union drunk he was called to order very soon and punished, and if the offence were repeated he was expelled. Under the old unions the men gave way to their passions. Under the new they were accustomed to regard all matters affecting their interests with moderation and candour. If this question of unionism and non-unionism were looked at by employers square in the face they would see that the class of labour supplied through them to the market was greatly improved; and if the men were obliged to work with non-unionists they might just as well dissolve their unions. The