

the Seamen's Union, have been the aggressors. We contend that our action has been beneficial to the owners themselves. The hours of labour for the engine-room were curtailed much to your advantage as well as to that of the men, for it is admitted by some of your engineers, who are candid, that they are able to keep their engines in quite as good a condition with a third of the stuff that used to be employed. I question, if you will submit a statement of the amounts paid on account of the engine-room, whether you can show any increase at all in the amount paid for overtime. I cannot put the figures down plainly at the moment, for I have not the necessary statistics, but I think I am safe in saying that if you will submit a statement there is no increase on that. They were not going "soojie, moojie" night after night. About mines I cannot speak. There are gentlemen here who are able to deal with that matter. I am looking at the whole question from the seaman's point of view. I must now take Mr. McLean's statement about what he calls the "prohibitory fee for entering the union." He told the Conference that he tried for ten months to get a man into a union, and that he was for that period of time unable to effect that purpose. I think Mr. McLean, you told me, or rather you admitted, that that happened about six years ago. At that time there were three-fourths of a majority required for any one who was balloted for to become a member. It is perfectly true that men who wished to become members have been rejected. If they were dismissed without election it must have been for some reason recognised by the union as prejudicial to its interest. It may be incompetence, or a variety of reasons. You cannot expect that seamen should ruin their union. You must surely give us the right to say whom we will accept and whom we will not accept. If we were to send an incompetent man on board any of the Union Company's ships we should very soon hear of it. The society is formed for seamen, firemen, and trimmers. We take in a certain number of colonial youths. As to this cry that we are so conservative, if so, how is it that you have to scour the country to get men when you want them? You have agents all round and up and down the country to try and get men, and yet you have not been able to get ten men who are regular seamen. The statement answers itself. If the society had been so conservative you would not have required to go any further than to put an advertisement in the papers. You are unable to get the men you want; the bulk of the *bona fide* seamen are in the ranks of the union at the present time. As to the charge of £3 and £5 as entrance-fee, I am not aware that there is a single union which charges that, or anything like it. To nine-tenths of the unions the entrance-fee is 2s. 6d.; £2 is the maximum. The charge for entrance-fee is arranged according to the accumulated funds of the society. If there is £10,000 to draw upon, you have to do certain things. If you allow a man all the rights of the union without paying anything for them, I would ask, are you going to reduce the capital account, to which every member admitted has contributed his share? You say in your company that your share is a £10 share, and that when a man has paid for his share he is entitled to certain benefits. Is it reasonable to say that we should admit men to all the benefits of the union for 2s. 6d.? If a man wants a share in a company he has to pay for it: for what a man pays into our union we give him the opportunity of making a good living. It is now admitted that the persons who are crying against this union are the same persons who once before urged us on to its present constitution. I will show you why they did so. Formerly, when the unions used to take in any one that offered for 2s. 6d., offers and inducements were held out to seamen to desert from the Home ships. At all events, the unions were accused of making offers and inducements to men to desert wholesale. The persons interested in the maritime trades—merchants and others—said, "You should make your conditions of entrance more stringent, so as to prevent these men deserting." We made our rules more stringent. We said no man could join who had not a colonial discharge—unless he was a *bona fide* seaman, and had resided two years in the colony. But now we are called conservative by the very men who asked us to do that. You say that we are trying to make a corner in labour. No; we are trying to carry out rules for the protection of all classes of labour. We say that union labour and non-union labour should not work together. We are responsible for the men we send out from the union. You say you have no wish to crush labour. If you mean that, acknowledge that we have the same right to the benefits of our union, for which we pay—the same right as you have to the benefits of your shares. Why should you try and disgust men with their union, pressing men to go out of them into the ranks of free labour already swollen by desertion from the union? But you say, "We do not object to your forming a union, but we will not allow you to affiliate." Why so? Because the men who speak thus think that they can deal with a branch or a single trade and crush them in detail. I think I can say, judging from the expressions of opinion which I hear around me, that there are representatives of 63,000 men of this colony assembled in this room; and the intention is to amalgamate more closely still. We do not want to cripple capital any more than you do; but we do not wish to be brought to that condition that we should have to work for sweating wages. If that cannot be done without in the colony, then labour is better out of it. I admit that, on the whole, this struggle has been, up to the present, conducted in an amicable spirit so far as the company is concerned. But they have done one or two things which caused a little irritation. One of these was the barricading the wharf. The company may say there was a necessity for that. But I do not think there was any necessity for it. With the exception of one little brush in Dunedin, there was no necessity for barricading the wharf. I say this: that had the union men been inclined to take action they were provoked to it. I have seen men, guarded by the police, putting their finger to their noses in derision at union men. If a non-union man assaults a union man he gets a month; if a union man assaults a non-union man he gets three months, and the affair is made much of by all the newspapers. If any free labourer challenges a union man to a breach of the peace, let him be punished; if a union man assaults a free labourer, let him be punished; but let both be treated alike; give the same to both sides. In conclusion, I would say, there is no feeling, so far as I am concerned, or so far as the Seamen's Union is concerned, against the Union Company. The men are willing to go back provided they can go back on terms fair and acceptable to themselves; but to go back and work with non-union labour I think they never will. I do not speak for other societies; other societies, possibly, have not put their rules in force. On behalf of the Cooks and Stewards', and also on behalf of