

the Seamen's, Union I say that they decline to accept employment from any person who will compel them to work with non-union men. You have all seen pretty well up to the present time how this dispute has arisen, and how it has been continued. The thing that caused the strike was the Union Company employing non-union men on the wharf in Sydney. So far as the Seamen's Union is concerned, we did everything that was possible to prevent it coming to New Zealand. It was arranged that the "Tarawera" should go on her voyage. I went to the directors myself and induced them to work with their own crew. We had a crew of capable men ready, and we agreed to put our crew in to work the vessel—to put in firemen, trimmers, and every kind of labour in order to keep New Zealand clear of this strike. Even after the trouble that came with the "Wairarapa" we were willing to help the whole coastal trade as far as was in our power. We did not call a single man out of the coastal steamers. At half-past 5 o'clock in the evening this matter of union and non-union labour was to be considered. The next morning there appeared an advertisement in the paper, "Wanted, seamen, firemen, and trimmers." Our union undertook to carry out the agreement made—that in some particular cases a non-union man might go into a ship, but we should not be compelled to work with non-union men. When they did afterwards force us to work with non-union men, then our men were compelled to stop working. I say, then, the Union Company were the aggressors. We did not object to allow a union man to go the trip with a non-union man, but when the ship came back it was expected that the non-union man would either join the union or go ashore. If a man lost his passage we have allowed a non-union man to go the round trip and come back with the ship before we asked that he should be discharged. We have always endeavoured to meet the Union Company fairly. Whenever one of our men committed himself on board their ships we knew how to correct him; so that he was much more afraid of the union than of the Union Company. We have more than once paid a day's demurrage when there was any detention on account of anything done by our men. We paid the Westport Coal Company £9 for two hours' delay at Timaru. We paid the Northern Company £13 on account of the detention of the "Rowena." I say again that, in so far as the Seamen's Union is concerned, we have endeavoured to assist the company in carrying on their work in every possible way. We are prepared to do the same to-morrow. But, as to the question of union men and non-union men working together, that forms an insuperable barrier. I, of course, speak for my own society. I allow other societies to speak for themselves. I think I have traversed the whole of the ground opened up by Mr. McLean. There may be something that I shall have to say hereafter, at a later stage of the Conference. In the meantime, I will not take up more of your attention.

*Mr. R. Seymour:* The Hon. Mr. McLean has spoken of working his company more like a Government institution than as a commercial enterprise. It is probably to that circumstance that we owe the fact that the Hon. Mr. McLean exerted his influence in the Legislative Council to prevent the labour legislation, which would have given relief to the working-class, and prohibited a measure intended for the benefit of seamen, passing into law. What would be the first result of non-union men being employed to work together? It would be this: that one or, at most, two union men would perhaps be employed, for the sake of their skill and experience, to show the others what to do. The ultimate effect could only be to give a premium to incompetence; and when you thus encouraged incompetence there would be an end of the union. The Hon. Mr. McLean has said that the Union Company used its money for the development of other trades. We know this: that, had it not been for the development of these other trades, Wellington would have been in a better position as regards shipping than it is this day. In any case, where non-union men were employed with union men there must be a considerable amount of overwork for the latter. As to the company not taking advantage of its monopoly, that argument would not hold water. It is a weak argument. The fact is that the monopoly of the Union Company was used with great disadvantage to the colony. He goes on to say that there had been some "grating" on board ship between men. He would probably admit that there were faults on both sides. It was well known that officers and engineers were not always the best-tempered people in the world. If a man is called names there was no doubt the person who used such injudicious remarks was creating friction. The Hon. Mr. McLean says that, owing to these "gratings," he and his company must get the command of their own vessels. He says he paid well and acted fair; but, if the unions are not allowed to act fair to themselves and to each other, it is a question, indeed, how long the Union Company will continue to act fair or pay well. I must take exception to the statement of the Hon. Mr. McLean when he says that his company had been running weekly boats only for the purpose of keeping the men employed. No company in the world would run boats for the sake merely of keeping men in their employment. He says he has got young men, the "flower of New Zealand," to man his vessels. The meaning of this is simply that he has three or four men in his vessels where only two had been employed previously. We know that there are some employers who stick at nothing; and where they have men, or employ men, who are not capable of doing the work to be done, the result is that the souls are worked out of the men who are really competent, and have to make up for the deficiency of the so-called "flower of New Zealand." Again, as to those "gratings" to which the Hon. Mr. McLean has referred, a man may make injudicious remarks on board ship. If they are such as should be visited with punishment his society will punish him. Mr. Millar has shown pretty clearly that in case of a ship not able to go to sea on account of anything done by a union man compensation has been paid, but, at the same time, the man is punished, and, as he said, a man is a good deal more afraid of the union than he is of the company. If he is expelled that man's name is sent to other branches, and he must leave the colony. The Hon. Mr. McLean has complained that we endeavour to starve his vessels by stopping the supply of meat. But, as the saying is, it is all fair in war; so in a struggle of this kind he must not be surprised that, when the unions are attacked, they use every means not only to strengthen their own position, but to weaken that of their opponents. It is perfectly true, as Mr. Millar pointed out, that the very men who are now complaining of the conservatism of the unions are the same men that urged them to make the rules more stringent. The Hon. Mr. McLean referred to a young man whom he tried for a long time to