

SESS. II.—1891.
NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT OF ROYAL COMMISSION ON STRIKES.

(APPOINTED BY GOVERNMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES, ON 25TH NOVEMBER, 1890.)

Laid on the Table by the Hon. W. P. Reeves, with the leave of the House.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable VICTOR ALBERT GEORGE, EARL OF JERSEY, a Member of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony of New South Wales and its Dependencies.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

I. We, the Commissioners appointed by your predecessor, Sir Alfred Stephen, on the 25th November, 1890, "to investigate and report upon the causes of conflicts between capital and labour known as strikes, and the best means of preventing or mitigating the disastrous consequences of such occurrences; and to consider, from an economic point of examination, the measures that have been devised in other countries by the constitution of Boards of Conciliation or other similar bodies to obviate extreme steps in trade disputes; and to consider and report upon the whole subject," have the honour to submit the following report:—

II. *Witnesses.*—We have sat fifty-one times, and examined fifty-five witnesses, some being industrial employers, others workmen earning wages, and others not distinctively belonging to either class. One of these witnesses was from Victoria, one from South Australia, and one from Queensland. Several of the local witnesses were actively engaged in the late strike, and their evidence will be of historical value, as disclosing facts connected with that important movement, and the views of those facts taken at the time. As each witness was examined from the standpoint both of employers and employed, the facts and opinions form a valuable mass of contemporary information as to the light in which the labour question is viewed, and as to the causes of that one strike in particular. The time at our disposal has not been long enough to admit of our taking all the evidence proffered to us, or to summon all the witnesses whom we could have examined to advantage; but the evidence we have taken has been sufficient to enable us to arrive at a practical conclusion. A précis of the evidence of each witness has been made, which gives the substance of this information in a narrative form, classified under a number of main and subordinate heads, and arranged in such a manner that, by glancing at the marginal notes, the substance of the evidence can be seen without wading through the evidence itself. The witnesses may be roughly classified as follows: Employers, 15—namely, squatters, 4; stevedores, 4; steamship-proprietors 2, and steamship company manager 1; colliery-owners 2, and colliery manager 1; master-builder, 1. Employed, 25—namely, miners, 3; marine officers, 2; seamen, 2; engineers, 2; building and carpentering, 2; tailoring, 2; typographical, 2; stewards, 2; shearing, 1; boiler-maker, 1; iron-moulder, 1; stonemason, 1; shoemaker, 1; coal-lumper, 1; wharf labourer, 1; builder's labourer, 1. Seventeen out of these 25 are, or have been, trades union officials. Independent, 14—namely, politicians and lawyers combined, 3; journalists, 3; judge, 1; clergyman, 1; station manager, 1; wharfinger, 1; registrar of friendly societies, 1; solicitor, 1; accountant, 1; manager A.M.P., 1; bank manager, 1. Grand total, 55. A summary of the views on conciliation and arbitration held by the various witnesses will be found in the Conciliation Appendix.

III. *Importance of the Subject.*—As to the importance of the question submitted to the Commission to study there can be no two opinions. It is undeniably the great social problem of the age. Even those who are least disposed to interfere between the contending forces, and who would prefer to leave the strife to settle itself, admit that the industries of the colony, and therefore its prosperity, are seriously hampered by the disagreements between employers and employed.