

the Court over matters of this sort?—I know what has taken place before, and I know this: you cannot alter the constitution of boys.

13. I do not desire to do so. It is not because a boy grumbles that there is to be a Court case. A Court case is often a very serious thing. By bringing a Court case the loser would have to pay the costs, and that would be a serious matter. You might have one case brought before Mr. Martin, who would not entertain it if it were of a trivial nature. This would act as a deterrent. The Inspector is not likely to be a fool, or to want to persecute you. The Inspector would not stay at one place all day long waiting a chance to find fault with an employer. He would have a lot of work to get through. I do not think there is any need for apprehension.

*Witness*: You do not think; but I know, from past experience, and if you had to do with lads in our profession you would know it. It is not like printing and tailoring—a repetition class of work—and plastering, bricklaying, or brickmaking, the same. With us we have boiler-making, pattern-making, engineering, blacksmithing, and other branches, and there are always different things cropping up which have to be done. The Inspector would naturally want to find something to do for his money.

*Hon. Mr. Reeves*: The Inspector would have plenty to do for his money. He would have many duties to perform, and many workshops to supervise. He would not be always watching one shop; and he would not be there every day to inquire into complaints made up by employes. He is not likely to be perpetually bringing owners into Court for the purpose of investigating grievances.

*Witness*: But I do not see any need for the Bill at all.

*Hon. Mr. Reeves*: That is a point we can discuss separately. We are not discussing now as to any necessity or otherwise for the Bill. I do not think it likely that under this Bill you will be dragged into Court every day to listen to frivolous complaints made by your apprentices.

*Witness*: You must pardon me, but I have been mixed up with the business for over sixteen years. Out of all the boys that we indentured, only two failed to complete their time, in consequence of their own carelessness, bad behaviour, and absenting themselves from work. They wanted to come back, but we would not allow that. I would not think it manly of me to make a report against an apprentice. A master must overlook these things, but the apprentice has no compunction about making a complaint against his master. If it is going to be a stand-up fight between man and man, you know what to expect. You can deal with the men.

*Hon. Mr. Reeves*: I am ready to admit that you must have a great deal of knowledge about these matters, as you have been working at a trade like yours for years. I agree with you that the Inspector should not permit you to be prosecuted unnecessarily, and I do not think it likely. As to whether the apprentices are likely to make unnecessary complaints or not is a matter of opinion.

*Witness*: Up to the last eighteen months we have always had apprentices, but we found we simply had to cease to indenture them for our own protection. In our class of business they put us to a lot of expense, more than they are worth. This Bill will make them worse if it passes, and turn them into a lot of larrikins, and you will want to have a dose of protection on top of it. We, at present, are employing eighty-five hands, and eighteen of those are boys.

14. *Hon. Mr. Reeves*.] They waste more than you get out of them?—Taking five years, with the uncertainty of work, the apprentices are not any benefit to you. As for ourselves, we shall cease to employ apprentices.

15. Rather a good thing for the men?—I can say the men will benefit considerably by it, and the avenues for boys will be shut up altogether.

16. *The Chairman*.] Do the boys learn one department at a time?—Yes; though you may put a boy, who is to be an engineer, into a shop to get a knowledge of pattern-work. But if you put a piece of machinery valued at £60 or £70 into the hands of an apprentice, and he breaks it, what redress have you? The whole trouble is to get a steady flow of work. If you have a steady flow like they have in the Old Country, and other places, then you can keep things going.

17. *Hon. Mr. Reeves*.] But they have slack periods in the Old Country?—You can put men on three-quarter time or half-time there, but here you must be open from eight till five. In the Old Country the men make a certain class of work, and work on short time if work is slack. I am in favour of legislating for the men, but in the present depressed state of things no good can be done by this Bill. I think it would be a good thing for the Government to postpone it for a year or two.

18. You are aware in many trades in this country boys are taken on for a year or two, and partially taught a trade at a low wage, and then allowed to “rip.” Could not you suggest anything?—I do not think it can be applied to foundry work. I do not know of one apprentice who has been turned out in Wellington who has not been able to command wages when out of his time.

19. Could you suggest a remedy for the present state of things, which undoubtedly obtains, where girls and boys are employed at trades and not properly taught?—If the unionism business could be worked, so many boys and so many men, then the thing could be managed; but you cannot carry it out in a country where the work fluctuates, and you have twenty extra men to-day and none to-morrow.

20. Then the boys could fluctuate with the men. Do you think, instead of indenturing them a fixed number of boys to a fixed number of men would be the better way?—That would be preferable. Then, as to the proposal to give 60 per cent. for the fifth year (we only apprentice for five years), I think it is too high. Why, our boys would be getting £1 15s. a week; and yet they would earn nothing for weeks and weeks. I think the whole trouble lies in the depressed state of trade.

*Hon. Mr. Reeves*: I think that is generally the trouble.

21. *Mr. Millar*.] You say you do not know any boys in the colony who have not been properly taught. I think you must have been talking from a Wellington point of view. Do you know the firm of Reid and Gray, or Sparrow and Company? I do not think that statement of yours can apply to them?—As far as the Wellington shops are concerned, I think it applies to the Wellington shops. I have seen boys working at our shop that served their time in one of the other Wellington