MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 14TH NOVEMBER, 1913.

WALTER MADDISON examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Maddison?—I am a member of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, and I am representing the Executive Board of the Carpenters and Joiners of the Dominion of New Zealand. I should like to say, taking Part VI of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Bill entirely "on its own," I am put somewhat at a disadvantage in having to deal with that part only; but as you are dealing only with the question of strikes I would like to say by way of preliminary that whatever legislation there may be strikes will always be a weapon of the worker until such time as the conditions under which labour works are equitable and just. I have always been one who has stuck up for the Arbitration Act, but if we are to have arbitration by coercion——

2. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] There is nothing about arbitration in this section?—Yes, I am coming to that.

3. *The Chairman.*] You must deal entirely with Part VI of the Bill. You must not deal with the Bill generally, but simply with Part VI?—There is one point that the worker objects to with regard to the strike clause, and that is that its principle is not broad enough. What is the definition of a strike? It is the withholding of services which we habitually perform for the public unless or until we get some greater benefit, concession, or increased emolument. Consequently if that is the fair definition of a strike the merchant, trader, or money-lender who refuses to perform his services to society without he gets increased emolument or other conditions is equally guilty of a strike. If you are prepared to broaden the strike clause to enable such a definition to apply to all classes of society, then I am sure the worker would welcome such a strike clause. There is another clause here—141—subclause (5) of which provides, "A proposal under this section to adopt the recommendations of a Labour Dispute Committee shall be deemed to be carried unless a majority of the persons entitled to vote on such proposal vote against such proposal." The worker objects to that on principle, because it is allowing those who do not vote to vote against the proposal. If a man will not exercise his vote is it democratic to allow his vote to count either one way or the other? Then, clause 147 provides, "Provided that the chairman of a Labour Dispute Committee shall have a vote in the determination of all questions from time to time before the Committee." This removes the question out of the hands of either party, and it is entirely a question as to which of the parties the chairman is on: the side that secures the nomination of the chairman secures the settlement in their favour. We think, in all fairness to all parties, that the chairman should not be empowered with a casting-vote and so be able to use his authority for the benefit of the party to which he happens to belong, whether labour or the employer.

4. *Mr. Davey.*] Who do you suggest should be chairman?—I am only suggesting that he should not have a vote. The fact of his having a vote gives him complete power of settling a question for the benefit of the side to which he happens to belong.

5. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] I suggest the Conciliation Commissioner?—That would be perfectly fair under the conditions, and labour would take no exception to that being the case; but it would take strong exception to either party being able to secure a chairman who would afterwards use his influence for the side to which he happens to belong. There is another provision in that clause to which very strong exception is taken: "any may also, if he thinks fit, in any such case dispense with the publication of the recommendations of a Labour Dispute Committee or of the result of any ballot." This is looked upon as being too despotic. Why deny the union the result of the ballot after a ballot has been taken and the result of the Labour Committee has been arrived at? The worker considers that as one of the parties primarily interested in the matter he is entitled to know the results. That is all I have to say on that particular section of the Bill.

6. *Mr. Anderson.*] Do you believe that it is possible to carry out a secret ballot?—In regard to a strike?

7. Yes?—It is quite possible, but it opens up the question whether any union—and the same thing applies to employers—whether they should not have the right to conduct their own internal management apart altogether from any restrictions in the Act, so long as they are acting in a perfectly constitutional manner. If they are acting on constitutional lines both parties contend—employers and workers contend—that they have a perfect right, so long as they are acting on constitutional grounds, of conducting their own business exactly in the manner that the majority may decide.

8. That is not the point I want to get at. What I want to know is this: in the interests of the community at large it is considered wise that before a strike—and I presume a lockout—takes place that a secret ballot of all the members of the union shall take place under the superintendence of an outside authority? Do you think that is feasible or practicable?—It would make it difficult to take such a ballot under the control of an outside authority, but there is all the machinery in all the unions for the purpose of taking a secret ballot at any time and on any question within the union itself. All the union rules provide for that.

9. I want to know whether you think it is feasible or practicable under an outside authority, and whether the unions would agree to it or not?—They would not care to accept the interference of an outsider, I think.