

At 8 a.m. on the 22nd idem the Waterside Workers' Union held a "stop-work" meeting to consider what action should be taken. When the meeting was over the men went to resume the work on which they had been employed on the previous day, but found that other members of the union had been engaged in their places. Another meeting was then held, and it was decided to stop work until the men who had lost their places were reinstated. The several employers of the men refused—viz., the Union Steamship Company, the Wellington Harbour Board, and other shipping companies—holding that in stopping work the men had committed a breach of the Waterside Workers' agreement, a clause of which provided that in the event of any dispute arising between the parties bound by the agreement or out of any matter connected with the agreement no cessation of work should take place, but that the matter should be referred to a committee consisting of representatives of the employers and of the workers for decision. At this stage the Waterside Workers' Union handed over the control of the strike to the New Zealand Federation of Labour.

Some attempts were then made by business men to load and unload vessels by means of their permanent employees, but these were forcibly prevented by the waterside workers, and, although negotiations were continued for some time with a view to the settlement of the strike, all attempts to peaceably end the dispute were unsuccessful. A new union of waterside workers was then formed and registered under the Act, and on the 6th November work was recommenced by its members under the protection of a force of special as well as ordinary police.

In the meantime the waterside workers at the other principal ports had ceased work in sympathy with those at Wellington, having been called upon by the Federation of Labour to do so. Immediately after the recommencement of work on the Wellington wharves, as above mentioned, the Federation of Labour called upon all unions of workers, including those registered under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, to join in the strike. This call, however, met with little response anywhere but in Auckland. The Wellington drivers (registered union) joined in the strike, but their places were mostly taken by other workers, who formed a new Drivers' Union and registered the same under the Act. The only other large bodies of workers in Wellington who took part in the strike were the builders' labourers (also registered) and the seamen (not registered); the latter left their ships after giving twenty-four hours' notice, and for a short time the coastal and intercolonial steamer services were almost suspended, but by means of volunteer crews services were maintained on the most important lines of communication. Although (except in one instance) the seamen employed in the overseas cargo traffic took no part in the strike, this traffic was suspended in consequence of the same, and was not resumed until after the recommencement of work on the wharves by the members of the new Waterside Workers' Union.

The inconvenience caused by the strike in Wellington gradually lessened, and many of the strikers drifted back to their former employment. Within a month from the commencement of work the volume of trade in the city had nearly resumed its former proportions, but the strike was not finally declared "off" until the 20th December. On the cessation of the strike nearly all those who had taken part in it joined the unions which during the strike had been registered under the Act.

In Auckland the response to the call for a general strike was more marked, as many as 5,916 workers in various trades having ceased work. With the exception of the waterside workers all the unions were registered under the Act. As in Wellington, there was a complete stoppage of cargo traffic for some days. The coastal steamer services were almost entirely suspended owing to the action of seamen in leaving their ships after giving twenty-four hours' notice, and great inconvenience was thereby caused to residents of outlying districts. New unions of waterside workers and seamen were formed, and work upon the wharves was resumed under the protection of special constables and ordinary police. Many of the workers concerned then returned to work after a few days of idleness, and by the 23rd November practically all the strikes in the city had ceased; the original bodies of waterside workers and seamen remained on strike until the Wellington strike was declared off on the 20th December.

At Christchurch and Dunedin also some inconvenience was caused by the cessation of work at the adjacent ports, where the waterside workers struck in common with those at Wellington and elsewhere (these unions were not registered). Work was shortly resumed in much the same manner as at Wellington—viz., by the formation of new unions, and with the aid of police. The only workers in Christchurch City who took part in the strike were the drivers (registered); a new Drivers' Union was formed and work was thus resumed.

Work was for a time suspended at the smaller ports of New Plymouth, Nelson, Westport, Picton, and Oamaru, owing to sympathetic strikes of (unregistered) waterside workers at those places, but at Gisborne, Wanganui, Napier, Timaru, and Bluff, where the unions of waterside workers were registered under this Act, no strike took place, and the effects of the disturbance were only indirectly felt. The only registered union of watersiders which took part in the strike was that at Greymouth.