

Report of Business Committee.

Mr. Bishop : I have to present the report of the Business Committee, which met last night. All the members were present, and the matters dealt with were : (1) the classification of the papers ; (2) the grouping and classification of the committees. Another matter which was referred to the committee by the Conference was whether the papers should be discussed or not. It was unanimously agreed that the order of presentation of the papers from the several groups represented in the Conference should be as follows : That the three remaining papers to be delivered by the Professors of Economics be taken first, and following upon these papers the order be—(1) The paper submitted by the Farmers' Union group ; (2) the paper entitled " Farming, or Primary Industries," by Mr. Nash ; (3) statement from the sheepowners' group ; (4) statement from the dairy-farming group ; (5) the paper entitled " Apprenticeship, Unemployment, and Immigration," by Mr. Bloodworth ; (6) paper on " Employment Assurance," by Mr. Finn ; (7) paper dealing with the freezing industry, by Mr. Chadwick ; (8) Chamber of Commerce statement ; (9) paper entitled " Workers' Compensation," by Mr. J. Roberts ; (10) paper submitted by the Employers' Federation group ; (11) paper on the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, by Mr. J. Roberts. These are all the papers of which the committee had any advice. As to the grouping of committees, the suggested grouping of committees contained in the order paper did not commend itself to the Business Committee, and it was unanimously resolved that there should be two main committees, with twenty-five representatives from each side ; that these two committees should be a Farming Industry Committee and a Secondary Industries Committee ; that a joint sub-committee from these two committees should be set up to deal with the question of shipping and transport, and another to deal with economics and finance. The suggested arrangement regarding the sub-committees on the order paper seem rather cumbersome, and we think that the Farming Industry Committee might be broken up into two sub-committees—that agricultural farming, sheep-farming, and the freezing industry might be grouped under one sub-committee, and dairy-farming might be attached to another sub-committee. We further think that the second main committee—that of the Secondary Industries—might also be divided up into two sub-committees—one for the manufacturing industries, and the other for distribution. It did not appear to the members of our committee that there was any need to set up a special committee of shopkeepers, or one for the timber industry. We think that the timber trade might very well be dealt with under the manufacturing section, and that the shopkeeping can be included under the head of " distribution." As to the third matter considered by the committee—whether the papers should or should not be discussed—we came to the conclusion that the papers submitted by the Professors of Economics did not come under the same description as the others. In the Prime Minister's letter dated the 4th February, appears the following statement : " It is suggested that each group prepare a carefully thought-out paper, stating generally the position as the members of that group view the problem. The advantages and the disadvantages of the present system should be dealt with as succinctly as possible. These papers should all be read, without comment or discussion, in open Conference, so that every one present may be familiarized with the point of view of each group." No doubt the papers submitted by the groups will indicate that that suggestion has been borne in mind, but I do not think it applies to those brought forward by the Professors of Economics. We therefore recommend that the professors' papers, not being the expression of the views of any of the principal parties to this Conference, shall be open for discussion ; that they should be read and circulated first, and that the discussion should follow after all the papers have been read. In the discussion we have decided that each speaker shall be limited to five minutes, and shall speak only once. If they so desire, the professors should have fifteen minutes each for reply. Regarding the other papers, the committee decided that relevant questions should be allowed, the questioner not to exceed three minutes in putting and explaining his question ; all questions to be asked first, and then the reader of the paper should have the right of reply, limited to fifteen minutes.

The report was adopted.

Memorandum on the Arbitration Court.

Paper by PROFESSOR ALLAN G. B. FISHER, Otago University.

Professor Fisher : We labour under some disadvantages because we do not represent any outside body except ourselves. It is rather impossible to attempt to deal with all the points that arise in discussing the Arbitration Court, and I have attempted in this somewhat broken memorandum to give you what I think of some of the most important points which have been raised, and also with one or two points which perhaps have not been raised to any great extent. It is not necessary to discuss at length the history of the Arbitration Court or the functions which its original founders intended it to perform. If it be found that these original functions have been modified or expanded, the Court will merely have been shown to be similar to most British institutions. It is more important to consider the functions which the Court actually undertakes to-day and those which it might reasonably be expected to carry out in the future.

1. *Prevention of Sweating.*—This, one of the original objects of the Court, has apparently been attained. Sweating is unlikely to be a serious evil in a rapidly developing country, but unless proper control is exercised on principles analogous to those which justify the Factory Acts, it is always likely to crop up in isolated sections of industry. The Arbitration Court probably exercises a useful influence in checking any such tendency, but if it were decided to abolish the Court it would not be difficult to devise other machinery for the same purpose.

2. *Prevention of Strikes.*—Here the Court is alleged to have failed. New Zealand is no longer a country without strikes. It seems, however, unreasonable to condemn the Court because it does not succeed in preventing every possible breach of the law. Even the most efficient Courts seldom