

working fortnight, whilst their central Council, with their approval, is agitating for a shorter working fortnight, and making threats of strikes if it is not conceded. What do the men want?

Within the past few weeks much consideration has been given to the re-fixing of the basic wage, both by State and Federal tribunals. In South Australia, the Board of Industry in July recommended that £3 12s. 10d. should be the living wage of adult male employees in the metropolitan district of Adelaide. At the end of September, according to the committee of the federated unions, it was sought to get Mr. Justice Powers, president of the Federal Arbitration Court, to fix a Commonwealth basic wage at £5 3s. 8d. per week, that being, as the committee contended, the rate dictated by the statistician's figures then as compared with the estimated cost of living when some time previously what was known as the Federal Basic Wage Commission recommended that £5 16s. be fixed. This amount had been rejected by Mr. Justice Higgins, when president of the Court, and he held that there was a flaw in the terms of the commission's appointment that made its conclusions negligible. Mr. Justice Powers, after taking evidence, determined that the Federal basic wage of £4 per week fixed by the Arbitration Court in November, 1920, must be continued. It provides, he said, those who have no children, or fewer than three children, with enough to keep themselves and their families in reasonable comfort.

THE FEDERAL BASIC WAGE.

The annual moonlight excursion of the Ancient Mariners' League, which took place on Friday night, October 14th, on Port Jackson, may be described in three words—music, song, and story. The "Ancients" were in good form. They gathered round the piano on the big Manly steamer which had been chartered for the occasion, and hawled every sea chanty ever printed. The unprintable ones, in view of the number of visitors present, they *sank to oblivion*; but more than once it was apparent they felt like doing otherwise. In between chantys and other vocal items, the Fire Brigades' Band rendered nautical music. A feature of the evening's trip was the visit paid to H.M.A.S. training-ship "Tingira" in Rose Bay, where lusty cheers were given for the youths in training to man our navy. These were just as lustily returned by the said youths. During the evening refreshments were served, and those aboard returned to Circular Quay at 10 p.m., more than satisfied with the evening's fun. Captain Arkley Smith, who was in charge of the arrangements, is to be congratulated.

A remarkable attitude has been taken up by the Industrial Workers Union of Australia (Miners' Branch, Illawarra District) regarding the working of three shifts in driving ventilating headings. It has always been the custom to work three shifts on such work, and when recently, the Mines Department asked the Mount Pleasant Company to facilitate the work of improving ventilation at its colliery by driving further ventilation shafts, the miners—despite the fact that the work was one likely to ensure safe working—objected to work three shifts to do so. The matter came before the Coal Tribunal appointed under the Industrial Peace Act on September 6th, and the chairman of the Tribunal, after hearing evidence from both sides, decided that the claim of the proprietors that three shifts should be worked to improve ventilation should be upheld. Despite this award the men refused to obey the Tribunal, and consulted the Miners' Federation as to what action they should take. The district secretary of that body thereupon told them that it was not the policy of the Federation to allow its members to work three shifts. The result was that this urgent and necessary work was hung up. When, late in October, no work had been done as directed by the Tribunal, the Mount Pleasant Proprietary, acting through the Southern Colliery Proprietors' Association, complained to the Tribunal of the men disobeying its award, and the chairman, Mr. Hibble,

called the parties before him and explained that the award had been made after most painstaking inquiry and deep consideration of the conflicting claims, and it must be obeyed. Messrs. Willis and Baddeley then stated that a meeting of the Central Council of the Employees' Federation would be held immediately to place the chairman's decision before the delegates. This was the position when we went to press. Quite apart from the defiance of the Coal Tribunal constituted by the men's decision not to work as directed, it is extraordinary that the miners should refuse to do work which is being undertaken mainly to ensure their safety whilst at work in the colliery.

Some stories of remarkable sailing feats claimed on behalf of the early ships are—well, just "stories," occasionally rivalling in extravagance, more or less, those told about the "sea-serpent." But the following few striking performances are well authenticated. The

NOTABLE SAILING FEATS RECALLED. The "James Baines" while running down her easting during 1854, covered 420 miles in 24 consecutive hours. In 1856 the "Red Jacket" averaged 334 knots for 8 consecutive days. "The Lightning," on a voyage to London from Melbourne, traversed 3722 knots in 10 consecutive days, whilst "The Sovereign of the Seas," after rounding Cape Horn, "flew" 4505 knots in 16 consecutive days before a heavy gale. In 1862 "The Dreadnought" sailed from Sandy Hook, New York, to Queenstown Island, in 9 days 17 hours. In 1884 the "Loch Torridon (Greenock to Melbourne)" sailed 1911 knots in seven consecutive days, and 642 knots in 48 hours over the same route the following year. At the same time the "Port Jackson" (London to Sydney) "reeled off" 332 miles during a stretch of 48 hours. On a subsequent trip (Sydney to London) the latter ship is credited with a run of 5200 miles for 15 consecutive days, an average of 345 miles daily. In 1890 the "Cutty Sark" covered the distance between the meridians of the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Leeuwin (3737 miles) in 13 days, average 286 miles daily; but on a later voyage she ran 7678 miles in 30 consecutive days, daily average 256 miles. In 1895 the "Argonaut" "skipped" from Cape Leeuwin to Sydney Heads (about 2060 miles) in 7½ days. Speed from Leeuwin to Cape Otway 12 knots; thence to destination 15½ knots (about). In 1896 the "Wendur" (Newcastle to Valparaiso), 6894 miles, in 29 days 2 hours; best daily run 330 knots. In 1897 the "Jacqueline" (Marseilles to Sydney) sailed 8788 knots during 28 consecutive days, representing an hourly average of 13 knots. Though she was launched 52 years ago, the "Cutty Sark" is still afloat and as "tight as a drum," but has been converted into a barquentine, and renamed "Ferreira" by her Portuguese owners, who bought her during the "nineties."

Revealing no trace of her original identity, the former German steamer, "Pfalz," now named "Boorara," and belonging to the Commonwealth Line, recently visited Melbourne to receive cargo for Europe. Her arrival recalled an almost forgotten incident of the Great War which happened immediately after Britain threw down the gauntlet. The "Pfalz" was then unloading merchandise from Hamburg in Melbourne, but her captain, hoping to escape internment, promptly ceased discharging operations, and taking a pilot proceeded down Port Phillip Bay. On the vessel reaching the Heads her pilot observed signals, flown by the naval authorities, ordering the ship to immediately return to port, a shot at that instant being fired across her bows from the fort as a warning of the fate which would probably befall all on board should the command be disregarded. Reluctantly and sullenly the German skipper accepted the lesser of two evils, whereupon the liner was turned round and brought back to the anchorage, an armed guard subsequently taking charge of her. Happening at the critical period of Britain's participation in the war and probably before the startling news was known in many parts of Victoria, the incident naturally caused considerable excitement.