

15. *Mr. W. Fraser.*] You referred just now to "working-hours": do you mean the hours the men are at work, or the hours below ground?—I take it that a miner commences work as soon as he leaves the fresh, pure air of the surface—*i.e.*, when he enters the mine.

16. What I want to know is, did you refer to the working-hours, or the hours the men are below the ground?—I referred to the hours underground—the hours a worker is away from the surface.

17. You stated that crib-time was from a quarter of an hour to twenty minutes?—From twenty minutes to half an hour.

18. From twenty minutes to half an hour, then. Did you refer to contract work or wages work?—Both. Contractors and wages-men generally take about the same time—in fact, they generally have crib together in the mines.

19. Did the legislation of last year in any way affect the output in the district that you are cognisant of?—I do not think so. I am absolutely certain it did not.

20. You said just now that that legislation has not been observed?—No, it has not been observed.

21. If it had been observed, would it in any way have affected the working-hours, and therefore the output?—It would have affected the working-hours, as I have said. I quoted the Golden Fleece Mine as an instance. It certainly would have shortened the hours in that particular mine by about half an hour a day. In other mines it would have increased the hours by about a quarter of an hour a day.

22. The working-hours?—Yes. I mean the Keep-it-Dark and the Progress Mines. The latter is the largest mine in our district, employing from 230 to 250 men.

23. Then, I am to understand that before the Act of last session was passed the working-hours were less than eight hours?—No; most decidedly not.

24. What were the working-hours?—I said that, as far as the Golden Fleece Mine was concerned, the hours of labour were practically nine hours—*i.e.*, that the men went in at 8 o'clock in the morning, and by the time they reached the mouth of the tunnel at night it was 5 o'clock. In the case of the Keep-it-Dark I stated that the men left the brace to go down at 8 o'clock, and it was a quarter past 4 when they reached the surface again. The case of the Progress Mine was similar to the Keep-it-Dark.

25. That was the position of matters prior to the legislation of last year?—And is still the position, because we have taken no steps to enforce the legislation of last year as far as the Golden Fleece Mine is concerned, for the simple reason that if we did in that case it would affect the miners in other mines; it would increase their hours—*i.e.*, the time they are below the ground. That is, in the case of the Keep-it-Dark and the Progress a quarter of an hour per day.

26. *Mr. Guinness.*] That is, assuming half an hour is allowed for meal-time?—Yes.

27. It does not say that in the Act, you know?—No, it does not.

28. *Mr. W. Fraser.*] Coming back to the question I asked you, the men have not started the practice in any of the mines there of working eight hours at the face?—No. It has never been the practice. When I first went to work at a quartz-mine seventeen years ago it was not the practice to work eight hours at the face.

29. How long did they work?—About seven hours and a half at the face.

30. Is the same time worked now?—About seven hours and a half; of course, about five hours and a half on Saturday, when there is a short shift. The Arbitration Court awarded that. You asked me in respect to the output?

31. Yes. It has been asserted by other witnesses that the result of last year's legislation, and more especially the result of the proposed legislation, would be to decrease the working-hours, and therefore affect the output. I wanted to know your view of that?—My view is this: About four years ago the Arbitration Court reduced the Saturday shift by two hours, and it never affected the output in any possible way. The men actually did as much work in the six hours they were working on Saturdays as they would have done if they had been working eight.

32. Were they working on wages or contract?—On wages. My opinion is that by shortening the hours of labour for miners you would not in any way affect the output. I believe there would be equally as much work done, and the work would be done as efficiently.

33. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Is there anything in the Act of last year that fixes the crib-time at any particular time?—I do not think last year's Act does fix it at any particular time.

34. Does it say half an hour?—I believe it says "exclusive of meal-times."

35. But does it say any time at all? Here is the Act; please read it?—It does not mention any particular hour. It just says, "exclusive of meal-times"—clause 5, section (1).

36. Very well. Then, will you please explain to the Committee how, in any case, the Act of last year can increase the hours underground?—I did explain.

37. Then kindly explain again?—I explained that it was eight hours exclusive of meal-times, and that the meal-time usually took from twenty minutes to half an hour. I pointed out distinctly and clearly that in one mine—*i.e.*, the Golden Fleece—the men were underground for practically nine hours. In the case of the Keep-it-Dark Mine they are underground eight hours and a quarter; in the case of the Progress, eight hours and a quarter; and in some few instances eight and a half.

38. We will take the Golden Fleece Mine, in which you say that under the old law they are underground nine hours: what is the crib-time in the Golden Fleece?—From twenty minutes to half an hour.

39. Under the law as passed last year what would be the position of the Golden Fleece miners?—The result would be to decrease the time underground by half an hour.

40. How do you make it out to be only half an hour? You say the crib-time is from twenty minutes to half an hour?—Yes.