

79. You do not think there has been any attempt to limit the output?—I do not think so.

80. You do not know of any case?—I do not. My experience is this: If a man knows that he has got only a certain time to work underground, and those hours are reasonable—they should be shorter than they are at present—he will work harder and do more work in a given time. It has been proved in connection with the short shift on Saturday that shortening the hours worked has not increased the cost of the output in any way.

81. Now, with regard to day-wages men on the surface, are there any on the surface—winding, hauling, or in the office?—Very few.

82. Take the office hands: I do not suppose their time will depend on the time of the men, will it?—No, I do not think so.

83. You do not suggest that their time should be shortened?—I do not suggest that the time should be shortened for surface workers.

84. Not for any of them?—Not if they are employed on the surface; but I would like to point out that there are engine-drivers employed underground, and I think their time should be shortened the same as the miners'.

85. Let us deal with the surface engine-driver: do you suggest his time should be shortened?—No, I do not.

86. Then, will you tell us what he is to do in the hour that you suggest should be struck off the time of the men underground? You say that the men underground can work an hour less and turn out the same output?—Yes.

87. Then, will you tell us what the engine-driver is to do during that hour?—There will be nothing for him to do, unless he has some baling or some work to do in connection with the shaft or the engine. There is generally something of that kind to be done by engine-drivers.

88. Now, I ask you, as a practical miner, if the shortening of the hours meant a decrease of wages to the men, would they, in your opinion, prefer existing hours and existing wages or shortened hours and less wages?—I could not say. I would not like to give an opinion on that matter. But I know this: that when the Consolidated Company started operations in our part the wages paid were 10s. a day, and the hours of labour were longer; but the men are now getting 9s. 6d. a day, and are working shorter hours. I do not think that they would revert to the old state of things.

89. That is a practical illustration. What were the hours when the miners got 10s. a day?—I should say, four hours a week longer than at present.

90. Four hours a week longer than they are working now?—The hours were reduced by two on the Saturday shift, and by half an hour a day on two shifts; that is four hours and a half a week.

91. How much less do they get now?—Sixpence a day for two classes of work, and the same for four classes.

92. What number of hours a week do they work now?—You mean at the different classes of work?

93. An average week's work?—If you count the time from when the men leave the surface till they get back to it, the hours worked per week would be at the very least about forty-nine a week at present.

94. And they were working fifty-three and a half?—Yes. A surface-man can leave his work. He is in the fresh air all the time, and as soon as 4 o'clock comes he can drop his tools and get away. A miner in some instances has to climb ladders, walk along drives and tunnels, and be hauled up in a cage. It is a very different thing altogether with him.

95. First of all, with regard to gold-mines: Can an increase in the cost of production of gold lead to an increased price for the gold in any way? Supposing you have got to pay more for getting the gold, is there any possibility of your selling it for a higher price?—I think they get the highest possible price for gold now. I believe the large British companies do.

96. If they are getting the highest possible price now, will any increase in the cost of production have to come off the profits of the mine?—I suppose it will, if there is any increased cost; but I am practically certain there will not be.

97. Now, with regard to coal, I ask you the same question: Is there a possibility of increasing the price of coal to the consumer?—I do not think so.

98. If there is no possibility of increasing the cost to the consumer, will any increase in the cost of production also come off the profits of the mine?—I may say that a lot of the increased cost of production is caused in many instances by bad management.

The *Chairman* here informed the witness that this matter must not be introduced into the evidence.

99. *Mr. Bennet.*] Is it the custom for the men in the quartz-mines in which you have been working to change shift at the face?—No.

100. The reason why I asked that is that one of the Inspectors stated here that that was the rule in the south?—It is not the rule in the Inangahua district.

101. *Mr. W. Fraser.*] It is the law?—It is not the law. There is a provision in the Mining Act—and I believe a similar provision in the Coal-mines Act (and I think they are very necessary provisions)—that anything of a dangerous nature should be reported. I believe that is absolutely necessary. Section 212 of the Mining Act, I think. There is nothing in the Act to state that the relief shall take place at the face, and, as a matter of fact, during the whole of my experience in the Reef-ton district it never has been the custom to change at the face. I might explain that since the advent of these new companies the system of work has been different from what it used to be when the old local companies were working the mines. I might be working in a stope to-day and in a drive to-morrow, and do not know who my relieving mates are to be. I am simply under the control of the shift-boss I go wherever he tells me to go, and if I am a practical miner, as I