

179. Then, there is another difficulty which I would like to know how you would get over. The Arbitration Court has decided that all the men working in, on, or about a mine are classed as miners except ordinary labouring-men; and if miners are working eight hours from bank to bank, what about the engineer?—I am not aware that the Arbitration Court has done that.

180. I am so informed by the northern union?—I hope it is so.

181. I will read an extract or two from the secretary's statement. He says, "We agree with the first portion of Mr. Guinness's amendment *re* striking out the words 'exclusive of meal-time' in clause 5 of the amendment of 1901, as this would agree with the award of the Arbitration Court, which provides for eight hours per day, inclusive of meal-time. The words 'exclusive of meal-time' would be unworkable, as it would mean that the men would require to work the eight hours at a stretch without any meal at all, seeing that when a mine is in full work it is worked continuously for three eight-hour shifts in the twenty-four hours. The latter part of Mr. Guinness's amendment is, we beg to point out, in contravention of the awards of the Court, as Mr. Justice Cooper has ruled that the word 'miner' included all men working in or about a mine, with the exception of surface labourers only."

182. Well, now, how would you get over that difficulty about the eight hours if the men are all to be up in the bank in eight hours?—Which difficulty?

183. If the man lets them down and the same man remains there until they come up, and they are only eight hours from bank to bank, he is there after them—he must be?—Oh, no; he does not work any longer hours than a miner. He goes on at 8 o'clock and knocks off at 4; when the miners reach the surface he knocks off too.

184. Taking the bank-to-bank time: supposing you have two hundred men to take down a shaft 1,000 ft. deep, how long would it take for these two hundred men to go down and get to the face if the face were a mile and a quarter away?—Under half an hour.

185. The meal-time would be from twenty minutes to half an hour?—Yes.

186. Supposing we divide twenty minutes and thirty minutes into twenty-five and twenty-five, that would give fifty minutes?—Yes.

187. I understand that includes going up as well as going down?—Of course, some of the men are down in two minutes. When I referred to the men going down I also referred to those going up, because as soon as one cage-load goes down the men are in the chamber and they step into the cage and go up.

188. What are the present hours on the surface, roughly?—I should say seven hours and a half.

189. This would make the time seven hours and ten minutes?—Yes; in some instances more, and in others less, it depending on the distance the men have to go.

190. I only want a rough average; that would be about right?—Yes, as far as the shafts are concerned.

191. Then, I take it, you will agree with me that, instead of the time being seven hours and a half as at present, the men would be there seven hours and ten minutes? The result would be that the men would do twenty minutes' less work for their employer in a day than at present?—Yes; that is, if you call work for the employers work at the face only.

192. *Mr. Colvin.*] I would like you to explain what you meant by saying that your union did not want the turmoil and trouble caused by bringing a case before the Arbitration Court, and that consequently you entered into an agreement with the employers. I understand that you had no objection to the Arbitration Court, but that it was to save expense and trouble that you made the agreement?—Yes, that was one reason. The only thing preventing us from entering into the agreement was the hours of labour; we wanted them shortened, but we thought it was better, as the employers were willing to agree to almost everything we asked, for us to enter into an industrial agreement and trust to Parliament, because it would do away with a lot of ill-feeling that necessarily is engendered when arbitration cases are before the Court, and would also save a lot of expense to the union, for on the West Coast it costs us a terrible lot of money to get the Court there, and to bring witnesses, and so on.

193. From your position as secretary of the union you know the feelings of the miners in regard to the eight hours from bank to bank?—Yes; I am brought into contact with every one of them.

194. And you are positive that the miners are anxious that this clause "exclusive of meal-times" should be struck out?—Most decidedly.

195. In other words, that the proposed amendment should be made?—That is so.

196. The men believe it is to the benefit of themselves and their health that the amendment should be made?—Certainly.

197. *Mr. W. Fraser.*] Is the industrial agreement entered into between the miners and the employers for any particular period?—Yes; two years.

198. Did you enter into it with the view of legislation being passed to alter it during its currency, or afterwards?—During its currency, certainly.

199. You say that the agreement was for a period of two years: is that two years from now?—From last January.

200. I will put the question again, so that there may be no misunderstanding: Do the miners hope that legislation will be passed which will affect that agreement during its currency?—Yes, they do. They fully expected that the hours of labour in mines should be regulated by Act of Parliament.

201. During the currency of the agreement?—Yes.

202. Then, did they disagree with subclause (4) of section 5 of last year's Act, where it is provided that "so long as such award continues in force this section shall be read and construed subject to such award"?—Certainly they did.