

203. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Is the agreement one under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act, or a private one?—It is an industrial agreement.

204. *Mr. J. Allen.*] It has all the force of the Act?—Yes.

205. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] What has been your experience for the last twenty years of working underground on the health of the miners?—If I had not left it I would not have been here to-day. I had to leave it, although a young man, because it was affecting my lungs and my heart.

206. I did not mean you personally. Take, say, five hundred men working underground in the Reefton district, and compare them, from your own personal knowledge, with five hundred men working on the surface in the same district for the same time: what has been the effect on them?—To send a large number to the cemetery. Scarcely a month goes by that we have not to make a subscription to provide for some man with a family—a young family in many instances—who is suffering from a miners' complaint. He cannot work, he has lost his wind, his heart is dilated, and he is practically in consumption.

207. What is the state of the ventilation in the Reefton mines generally?—Since Mr. Tennent has been Inspector of Mines there it has been different from what it used to be. There has been an improvement in it; and I believe the organization of the miners' union has had something to do with that.

208. I asked that question about ventilation with the view of coming to this point—*i.e.*, taking instructions from the boss at the face. Is it a fact that in many mines they do not allow it to be worked?—I can say, from my own knowledge, that not long since men had to knock off work through bad ventilation. I refer to the Wealth of Nations Mine. In my opinion, a jet of water should be continually spraying on the boring-hole. The dust from the rock-borers is very injurious to the men's health.

209. Do you consider it is safer for the men going on shift to take their instructions as to what face they are to go to from, say, the underground manager or the deputy than from the men they relieve?—Most decidedly; he is the proper person.

210. He is responsible, according to law?—Yes. The Act states quite plainly that anything wrong has to be reported to him.

211. With reference to Mr. Guinness's Coal-mining Bill, is it a fact that the shifts going on never take any instructions from the shifts that are relieved?—I should not think they would.

212. They are not allowed to go on to the face before the deputy goes there?—I know that that is so in a great many cases. This applies to the first shift that goes on each day.

213. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Do you know anything about the coal-cutting machines that are working on the West Coast?—I have seen them.

214. Are they putting out at the present time all that they can put out?—That I could not answer. I suppose the owners are trying to make them put out all they can.

215. If the hours of labour are reduced by half an hour or an hour a day, will the machines be able to put out as much as they are putting out now?—Yes; of course, it all depends on the men's work. My experience of workers is that the shorter you make their hours the harder they work and the more effective their work is.

216. With reference to clause 212 of the principal Act, you said that an Inspector was wrong in saying that according to law miners should change their shift at the face. Will you please read subsection (3) of clause 212?—“Every person in sub-charge of and employed in mining operations in any part of the mine shall, on changing his shift, inform the person appointed to relieve him of the state of the workings in the part of the mine in which he has been employed.” That refers to the man in sub-charge; even if it did refer to a miner it does not refer to changing at the face. Where is he to “inform the person appointed to relieve him of the state of the workings” on changing shifts?

217. Where is he to do it except at the face?—According to the custom in the Reefton district, where anything of the kind has taken place it has not been at the face at all. It is either done at a chamber or on the surface where the men congregate, not at the face at all. Any statement to the contrary made by an Inspector of Mines as far as the Inangahua quartz-mining district is concerned is incorrect.

218. Does not this subsection refer to two different people—the person in sub-charge and the person employed in mining operations—in your opinion?—To my mind, it applies to the person in sub-charge—the shift-boss.

219. Then, what about the words “and employed in mining operations”?—“Every person in sub-charge of and employed in mining operations.”

220. Are not those two different people?—No, certainly not.

221. “On changing his shift”: where is he to change his shift?—Either on the surface, or at the chamber, or at the brace. I speak of the Reefton district, but I believe it applies generally to the quartz-mines of New Zealand. I believe it applies to the Thames. I may say that it was our union that asked for that clause to be inserted in the main Act. We drafted it and sent it up. Mr. Cadman was Minister of Mines at that time, and when we drafted it it was distinctly for the purpose of applying to shift-bosses, and shift-bosses only.

222. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Who is responsible for the firing of shots in the Reefton mines?—The men employed at the face.

223. They can fire a shot whenever they like?—Certainly not. If a man is a miner there is no danger in his firing shots; but if there is a mishole his duty is to go and report that to the shift-boss.

224. Does one boss look after more than one face?—He has charge of all the faces in a mine. Even here you will see that the manager himself, independent of the shift-boss, is responsible; he personally has to make inspections.