

222. Have you had any practical experience down in a mine?—Oh, yes; I have always been up and down, and understand it fairly well.

223. From observation?—Yes, from observation.

224. Are you the mine-manager?—I am the general manager, and supervise the whole.

JAMES LOUDON examined. (No. 7.)

225. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—James Loudon.

226. Where do you live?—At Walton Park, six miles south of Dunedin.

227. What is your occupation?—At present I am a mine owner and manager.

228. Have you got a mine-manager's certificate?—I have.

229. For coal or gold mining?—Coal-mining.

230. Have you yourself done any work underground?—Not in the way of working—I am not a miner—but I have filled all the other places about a mine. I have been connected with mines for thirty-eight years. I may say that I am one of the pioneers of coal-mining in Otago.

231. What grade is your certificate?—First-class.

232. By examination?—No. I got it when the Act came into force.

233. What is your mine?—The Jubilee.

234. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Do you know this Bill?—Yes.

235. What effect would it have if passed?—It would shorten the hours by half an hour per day.

236. What effect would that have on your mine?—In our mine, of whatever work is done on shift-wages there would be from one-twelfth to one-fifteenth lost, and also on all of what is known as the on-cost labour.

237. What do you mean by "on-cost"?—The stokers, engine-driver, headmen, and all other hands connected with them who are not engaged in actually hewing coal. Coal-getting as a rule is on piece rates, but about one-sixth of the coal-hewing is done on shift-wages on account of inferior places, and for other reasons.

238. What effect would the passing of this Bill have on the shift-wages?—They would be less by one-fifteenth at least.

239. Now about the pieceworkers?—It would not affect the cost of the coal as far as the pieceworkers are concerned.

240. How would it affect the output then?—Over the whole concern we would lose one-fifteenth. It would restrict our output to that extent, and at the same time we would have to pay the same rate to all on-cost men, engine-drivers, and so on, and there would be one-fifteenth struck off the possible output.

241. Supposing that the pieceworkers could produce the same amount of coal working half an hour a day less than at present, could you get that coal away from them?—Not in some of the mines.

242. Why not?—Because the plant is usually just suited for the labour to be done in what we term the busy season. You could do it perhaps at times when you were not so busy, say, for six months in the year, but for the other six months most of the mines—or some of them, at all events—both as regards plant and the on-cost staff, is taxed to the utmost.

243. If you had to do the same amount of work in shorter time, could it be done in the busy season?—No.

244. What would you have to do, then?—I do not know what we would do at all. It would not do to put on another shift. We would have to lose trade. The least unprofitable thing to do would be to lose it. It would affect the miners also. It would not be good for them—I mean this change that is proposed.

245. Why would not the proposed change be good for the miners?—In this way: As I have said, the mine in good times is taxed to its utmost; in the other half of the year it is different altogether, for neither the plant nor the miners are getting sufficient work. Well, then, if you are obliged to increase the number of your men to get out the required amount of coal, supposing your plant would do it, and you put on so-many more miners—pieceworkers or others—that would increase the number of men to be retained in the summer also, and the consequence would be that the miners' annual earnings would be reduced.

246. Because of there being more idle men in the summer-time?—There would be more men to do the work, and the consequence would be that the year's earnings of each and all of the miners would be reduced.

247. Supposing that the same rate of wages were retained for the shorter hours proposed in the Bill, are you making sufficient profit to take that out of your profit?—We are; others that I know of are not. The reason that we are is that ours is a comparatively new mine, and also that it is very fortunately situated—*i.e.*, we have no water to trouble us. It is a free level, so that the water can run out by its own weight; consequently we are not put to the same expense as others.

248. Your levels are increasing every day?—Yes.

249. That will mean further on-cost?—Yes; and further travelling-time.

250. And as the travelling-time increases the loss increases?—Yes.

251. So that presently you will be in the same position as the others?—Yes, with the exception of the water.

252. That is, if you get water?—I do not know what is ahead of me.

253. You are not a practical coal-getter?—No.

254. From your own experience, have you found a miner a weak and sickly man, and his occupation injurious to him generally?—No, I do not think so. From my own observation the