

321. Did you do any hewing at all?—No.

322. No manual work?—It was all manual work, but not actual coal-hewing—timber-work, and so on.

323. *Mr. J. Allen.*] You have seen the Bill?—Yes.

324. What effect would it have, if passed, upon your mine?—It would increase the cost of getting the coal, for one point, and would decrease the output.

325. Are your men shift-wages men or pieceworkers?—The coal-hewing is almost entirely done on piecework. All the other workers, of course, are day-wages men.

326. What is the proportion of day-wages men to pieceworkers?—We have twenty men working, and of that number about twelve or thirteen are coal-hewers. The number varies a little.

327. They are on piecework?—Yes.

328. How would Mr. Guinness's Bill, if passed, affect the pieceworkers?—The difficulty, first of all, is to decide exactly what the loss of time would amount to; it may be half an hour a day, it may be three-quarters, it may be an hour.

329. Why do you say that?—Because at present we work on the theory of half an hour for the midday meal, but nothing is stated in the Act about it. The men actually take more than the half-hour, and I believe the tendency will be to try to make it as near as possible to an hour.

330. If the time is not specified in the Bill?—Yes, if it is not specified.

331. Supposing the time for crib were half an hour, and the pieceworkers worked half an hour less underground, what effect would it have on the output?—It would reduce it by about one-fifteenth.

332. Do you think that your men, taking them altogether, could produce in half an hour less time as much coal as they are producing now?—No, certainly not.

333. If it were stated in evidence that the men could do it, would you believe that to be correct?—No; I do not believe they can.

334. What effect would the reduction of half an hour a day proposed in the Bill have on the day-wages men?—If the wages were kept at the same rate we would lose that half-hour. Owing to the situation and different things about the mine we are entirely dependent upon horse-haulage, and we could not drive the horses and take out the same amount of stuff in the shorter time.

335. When you are working your full capacity in the winter-time is your haulage taxed to its utmost?—Yes.

336. If you had to take out in seven hours and a half what you are now taking out in eight, could you do it with your haulage-power?—No.

337. Were you in the Court when the Allandale case was settled?—I was in the Court when the judgment was read out.

338. Were you there when the question was raised of bank-to-bank or face-to-face?—Yes.

339. Did you hear what the Judge said when he made a remark as to at any time having to reconsider the question of wages and shorter hours?

*Mr. Guinness* objected to this question being put to the witness, and the Chairman ruled it out of order.

340. Have you anything further to say as to the effect this Bill would have upon your mine if it became law?—We consider that it would add to our cost. First of all it would strike the mine-owner. Shortly after it would strike the public. We look at it in this way: The miners would wish the hewing-rate raised on the plea that they should get whatever they are getting now; they would ask for as much pay for working the shorter time as they get at present. After a certain amount of looking into the subject, we estimate that it would come to something like from £10 to £12 per man for all our men. I may state that the deputation of which I am one represent mine-owners who employ between six and seven hundred men—rather more than one-fourth the total number of coal-miners in the colony—and if you put £10 or £12 per man on to them you will get something like £6,000 or £7,000 a year from our Otago District alone, which, taken on the basis of the number of men, amounts to, say, from £25,000 to £30,000 a year to the public. It seems to me that it is protecting the miner at the expense of the whole population. In Dunedin we have a local steam-coal, which is put on the market at a cheap rate. Our steam-coal price, railage paid, is 8s. a ton in Dunedin. This coal is of great use to the manufacturers of Dunedin, which town has very large manufactures, dependent considerably on this local supply of coal. I may state that one large factory uses generally 12 tons a day; and we consider the passing of the Bill would injure all these industries, as it ultimately would come down on the consumers.

341. Does the Newcastle coal come into competition with your coal now?—To a certain extent.

342. Would it more so if your price were raised?—Yes.

343. Would it seriously do so?—I could not state as to what extent it would come into competition with ours, but we know we are just verging on the line now, and the competition is getting keener.

344. *Mr. B. McKenzie.*] In answer to Mr. Allen you said that the passing of Mr. Guinness's Bill would lead to an increase in the hewing-rate: how much per ton do you pay for hewing now?—We have a different way of working it, I may explain, from the West Coast method. We have five different rates.

345. Are you working under an award of the Arbitration Court?—Yes.

346. What is the average rate?—I will give you the rates, and you can strike the average. We are working on rates of, per box, 1s., 9d., 7d., 6d., and 4d.

347. How much does a box hold?—Nominally 5 cwt.; actually from 5½ to 6 cwt.

348. Your rate would be about half a crown a ton on an average, would it not?—The largest proportion of the stuff is at 7d. a box—the steam-coal.