

100. *Mr. Gilfedder.*] How do you mean—"exempt"?—If the Act were not made applicable to all mines, a well-favoured mine such as I have mentioned would have a decided advantage over a mine not so well favoured.

101. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] You mean to say that it would not be fair competition?—That is what I mean.

102. *Mr. Lang.*] What I wanted to get at was this: Would it not be worse for a man to work for, say, five hours in a mine which was damp, or where the air was bad, than to work eight hours in a mine where the air was pure and everything in a satisfactory condition?—Yes, from a health point of view.

103. Would it not be better, then, to have the question decided by the Court instead of having a hard-and-fast rule by a law passed by Parliament?—There is a great difficulty there. When you bring a case before the Court it is a very difficult matter to get men to come forward and give evidence on that point—*i.e.*, damp or any bad conditions existing in any mine. The men are very much afraid of doing so. Therefore I think it would be better to have the matter settled and made applicable to all mines.

104. You prefer dealing with the matter by legislation rather than leaving it in the hands of the Arbitration Court?—Yes.

105. *Mr. Bennet.*] Do the miners work on piecework or by day-labour in the Kaitangata Mine?—The coal-hewing is done by piecework. I might explain that there are certain places called "deficient places," and provision is made for working these on shift-wages; but where the tonnage rates are fixed they work on piece.

106. If this Bill were brought in and the hours shortened, would their wages be affected?—Only so far as an award of the Court might go, or an agreement.

107. I will put it in this way: Could the men take as much coal out though they worked half an hour less as they are doing at the present time?—I contend that a miner does, generally speaking, tire himself long before seven hours. That has been my practical experience.

108. Do you think, then, that he could do the same work in less time?—I am positive he could.

109. *Mr. J. Allen.*] You say that a man tires himself long before seven hours?—That is my experience.

110. Can you give us any idea as to when he tires himself—after working how many hours?—I am speaking of the men hewing coal.

111. Yes. You say that a man tires himself before he has worked the usual time now?—It would depend on the quality of the air he was inhaling as to when he tired himself.

112. Assume that he is working in pretty good air. You work at the face now seven hours. In your mine—given good air, as I said before—at what hour of the seven does a man get tired?—Speaking for myself, I get tired, and did before, in six hours.

113. What did you do between the sixth and seventh hour?—Just potted away—frittered away the time.

114. Could you not have gone out if you had wanted to?—Yes; years ago we could, and did. We did that at Denniston.

115. What do the men do now?—Stop in the mine.

116. In your experience, did you work six hours and idle the other hour?—If the air was good we could and did tire ourselves in the six hours.

117. The other hour you did not work?—We frittered it away.

118. What did you do if the air was bad?—We worked much less.

119. You tired in a still shorter time?—Yes.

120. Is it your experience with the generality of miners that that is so?—Yes, speaking generally.

121. Do you mean to tell the Committee that an average miner could put out in six hours and a half as much as he is now putting out in seven?—Speaking from my own experience, yes.

122. You apply that to miners generally?—Yes.

123. Now, what about the supply of skips to the miners: could that be done in six hours and a half?—I should say that it would depend on the system of haulage.

124. Could it be done with the existing systems of haulage—the same amount of skips that are now supplied in seven hours to be done in six hours and a half, speaking generally?—There might be some difficulties in some mines, but in others that I know of there would be no difficulty.

125. Now, you referred to one or two mines in particular, amongst them the Allandale. You said, with regard to the underground haulage, that you thought they could put out—I am speaking of their busy time—with the existing system of underground haulage more than they are now doing?—That is what I think.

126. How long ago are you speaking of?—I was down there about five weeks ago.

127. It is your opinion that with the existing system of haulage they could put out in half an hour less as much as they are now putting out?—Yes.

128. You speak from practical experience?—Yes.

129. If the managing director says that it is impossible, is he wrong?—That is my opinion. I do not like to say any one is wrong.

130. Now, with regard to the question of fair competition, I understand that your desire, as the representative of the miners, is that all mines shall be put on the same basis by law as to the hours of labour?—That is right.

131. That is to say, that the hours of labour in good mines shall be limited by the hours worked in bad ones?—That is what I think is a fair thing to do.

132. You think that because a mine is a good one, with good air, the men working in that mine should be limited with regard to hours because other mines are bad?—Yes. Another reason is that the conditions change so much.