

133. But the conditions being better in one mine than in another, you say that that mine ought to conform as regards hours of labour to other mines where the conditions are bad?—I must qualify that. Conditions may be good, and are undeniably good at times, but they change very quickly. If the Bill were not made applicable to all the mines, the very mine that was exempt might in the very near future come under the same conditions as the others.

134. You are making an assumption, and I am going to make another assumption. Are there any mines in New Zealand where the ventilation and water are good at all times?—Yes, there are, generally speaking.

135. Do you mean to tell me that it is the desire of the miners that in those mines their hours of labour should be limited by the hours of labour that ought to be worked in the worst mines in New Zealand?—Of course, all mines are subject to impure air to a certain extent; some worse than others, of course.

136. Is it fair that the hours of labour in the best mine in New Zealand, with good water and air at all times, should be limited by the hours of labour that ought to be worked in the worst mine in New Zealand?—I think so, on the grounds that I have already stated.

137. On what grounds?—On the grounds of competition, and of their being liable to changes.

138. That is to say, that you desire, on behalf of the miners, to urge the point that a mine should be limited in its output, although it has good air and water, by a mine that has bad conditions?—I urge it on the grounds that I consider the time specified is quite sufficient for a miner to work.

139. That is not an answer to my question. You, I understand, on behalf of the miners, desire that a good mine should be limited in its output by the possibilities of a bad mine?—On the grounds of sudden changes occurring.

140. But suppose there are no sudden changes occurring, what then?—I have yet to see a mine where there are not.

141. But suppose that there are mines that are not subject to sudden changes, where the ventilation and the air are good and there is no water, is it the desire of the union that the output of one such mine should be limited by what is put out from a mine that is bad in water and ventilation?—I do not think it is a fair question.

142. Have you not said that you desire that the output from a good mine should be limited by that from a bad one, so as not to have unfair competition?—I have yet to see the mine where really good conditions do exist.

143. The mines vary?—Yes.

144. Then, in a varying mine, is it your opinion that the good should be limited by the bad?—That is so.

145. Now, do you not think that a mine where the conditions are good should have the advantage of those conditions in its output?—I will answer that by saying that I have yet to see the mine where good conditions obtain.

146. I will put it in another way. Take any mine you like: Do you think that its output when it is in good condition should be limited by the possibilities of its output when it is in its worst condition?—I take the good with the bad, and say that the hours should be specified.

147. The good should be put with the bad, and the hours should be specified in all mines?—Yes, in all mines.

148. You gave evidence about the bad air in mines, and the effect of it upon the miners' health: are the men allowed to go into a mine when the air is bad?—In many cases, yes.

149. Is that according to the law?—No, it is not.

150. Do you mean to say that the law is broken?—I have seen it broken as regards bad air existing in a mine.

151. Did you report it?—I drew the attention of the manager to it.

152. And was it rectified?—I am sorry to say we had to continue as long as we could.

153. Where was this?—At Walton Park.

154. Does not the deputy go round to every face before every shift goes in, examine every place, and report whether the air is good or not, and whether the conditions are suitable for working?—He does.

155. And does he not stop the men from going in if the conditions are bad?—It depends on the mine you are working in.

156. Take the Allandale Mine, when you were there?—I answered that before. Speaking generally, the conditions were favourable when I was there.

157. Is your life insured?—Yes.

158. Did you find any difficulty in insuring?—I was on the railway when I insured.

159. How long ago was that?—I was insured only about five or six months.

160. Do the insurance companies make any difference if you are going back to a mine?—I cannot speak positively on that point.

161. Have you been back to mining since?—No.

162. Supposing that this Bill becomes law, what will be the effect on the day-wages men underground, as far as you know?—I think it ought to be made applicable to them too.

163. It would shorten their hours by half an hour if it were passed?—Yes.

164. What effect would that have on their wages?—That would depend on the agreement or award which they were working under.

165. Do you mean to say that the Bill, if passed, would break an agreement?—No. I say it would depend on the agreement or award they were working under. I take it that the Bill would not come into operation until the expiration of an agreement.

166. At the expiration of the agreement, when the worker's wages have to be reconsidered with the shorter hours of work, what effect would the shorter hours have on his wages?—Assessing the wages would be a question for the Court.