

now are thirty-five minutes less than they were previous to March twelve months ago. We suffered a reduction in the hours of labour to the extent of thirty-five minutes a day through the last Bill. Here is another Bill coming on which means another half-hour—and it might mean more. I think that when the cases came before the Arbitration Court last time the hours of working satisfied everybody. What is eight and a half or nine hours a day for any man under twenty-one years of age to work? It is quite different in the Old Country. There coal is produced by hand-labour. Two men are mates. One goes down at half-past 3 o'clock in the morning, and stops about seven hours and three-quarters before he comes out. His mate goes down at about 10 o'clock in the morning, and as soon as he approaches from the bottom of the shaft to the face the first man goes out. But the boys and the men engaged in looking after the road—the horse-drivers, switch-keepers, trappers, landing-boys, pumpers, balers—all these go down at half-past 6 o'clock in the morning and remain ten hours before coming out. The rope and the cage are running close upon ten hours a day. But with us, if you knock half an hour off you interfere with the whole concern. We have only thirty-six coal-hewers at our place, and these are divided into two shifts. Nine pairs go in in the day shift, and nine pairs in the afternoon shift. The far-off mine, which is the principal one, is worked by machines. There is nothing that is hard or laborious about the work. Not even is the coal-hewing hard. And here is another half-hour in each shift knocked off us. That means another hour in the two shifts; and what compensation are we to get for it?

9. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Put it on to the great public, like you always do? Yes, but the last straw will break the camel's back. You are giving an inducement for Newcastle coal to come here; and, mind you, the Newcastle owners are opening up and developing mines just a little north of Newcastle, and at one mine in five years' time they expect to raise 5,000 tons a day. We want to look to futurity; and if those people cannot find a market for their coal they will come to where they can get one, and the people of New Zealand will take the Newcastle coal if they can get it for 2s., or 1s. 6d., or 1s., or 9d a ton less. They have put up with it in the Newcastle district, where the difference in the quality of the coal is very marked; and they have taken away the cheap coal rather than the best. Then what is done? The best-coal collieries come down in their price, and then there is a general reduction throughout the mines. Another thing: The Newcastle colliery-owners in the northern district are introducing coal-cutting machines to save labour, and the system will work far better there than it does here—far better and more cheaply. In New South Wales the coal-hewers go down, the fore shift at 6 o'clock in the morning, and the back shift at 8; but the boys go down at half-past 6, and remain till 4 o'clock in the afternoon. And, look you, when we get all our coal brought to the pit-bottom, as the saying is—which means the rope—we have our difficulties to contend with after that. We have three inclines to send our coal down, the average grade being about 1 in 5, and there are men at the top and bottom taking off and putting on. If you take half an hour off us it allows us no time in case of a smash to make up any loss that we have sustained through the day. Many a time we have to stand still for two hours; we can work ourselves up a little bit by having half an hour, and it hurts no one. It does not hurt those who have to do it, because they are boys. The seams that we are working are very high, and it is pleasant to go and come back dry. Everything is comfortable, and the ventilation is good.

10. *Mr. J. Allen.*] I would like you to look at Mr. McKenzie's Bill for a moment, and tell us what you can about the definition of the word "miner." Will clause 2 class all the workers in mines—it does not apply to coal-mines—as miners?—Certainly it will. It means that all workmen underground will be "miners."

11. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] In which mines?—Under the Mining Act.

12. *The Chairman.*] It is different from the Coal-mines Act?—The clause says, "shall mean and include every workman employed underground in a mine."

13. *Mr. J. Allen.*] You know sufficient about ordinary mines—not coal-mines—to inform us as to what the meaning of this clause will be?—It means that every man, no matter what he is engaged in doing, who works underground in a mine is designated a "miner."

14. What effect will that have?—I do not know what effect it will have.

15. Supposing this Bill comes into law and makes an eight-hours day from bank to bank, will it not mean that every man—balers—?—These men will come under the same category as miners, and they should not.

16. Tell us why they should not?—Because theirs is not skilled labour, and it is not hard work that they do. You can go and pick men off the streets to do the trucking and so forth in a mine.

17. If this Bill passed they would be all classed as miners?—Yes.

18. And work only eight hours—not work—?—Not work, but be under the same conditions as a proper practical miner; and they ought not to be.

19. If this alteration is made in the Mining Act, do you not think it likely that it will by-and-by be made also in the Coal-mines Act?—Yes, I am sure it will.

20. I would like you to tell us what would be the effect of this definition of the word "miner" being applied to coal-mines?—It would have this effect in a coal-mine: Every man who considered himself a miner would expect the same remuneration as any other miner. He would expect to be paid with the men who were classed as miners. A man who was not considered as a miner now, if brought under the same heading as the miners, would expect the same rate of pay as a miner.

21. What men go into your mine now, other than coal-hewers?—Blasters, general shiftmen for setting timber, fillers, truckers, a horse-keeper, mechanics to repair pumps, rope-road boys, trappers, drivers, and—

22. Would these men all be classed as miners if a Bill similar to this, applying to coal-mines, became law?—Yes.

23. With regard to these men, if the hours of labour of the actual coal-hewers were reduced—as they would be reduced under an eight-hours bank-to-bank day—would the hours of labour of all these other men be reduced also?—They would.

24. Would that interfere with the working of your mine?—It would stop the running of the mine half an hour in each shift. We have two shifts working at our mine. It would stop the running of coal half an hour in each shift.