

1903.

## NEW ZEALAND.

## GOLDFIELDS AND MINES COMMITTEE:

REPORTS ON THE MINING ACT AMENDMENT BILL AND THE COAL-MINES ACT AMENDMENT BILL; AND ON THE PETITIONS OF J. BAILEY AND OTHERS, E. A. GRAHAM AND OTHERS, THOMAS YOUNG AND OTHERS, G. NEWTON AND OTHERS, R. McMILLAN AND OTHERS, E. MARTIN AND OTHERS, J. JENKINS AND OTHERS, AND A. STEELE AND OTHERS ON BEHALF OF THE AMALGAMATED MINERS' UNION.

*Reports brought up 21st August and 3rd September, and ordered to be printed.*

## ORDERS OF REFERENCE.

*Extracts from the Journals of the House of Representatives.*

FRIDAY, THE 3RD DAY OF JULY, 1903.

*Ordered*, "That Standing Order No. 211 be suspended, and that a Goldfields and Mines Committee, consisting of sixteen members, be appointed, to whom shall be referred all matters relating to mining and all Bills relating to mines, with power to call for persons and papers, five to be a quorum: the Committee to consist of Mr. J. Allen, Mr. Bennet, Mr. Colvin, Mr. W. Fraser, Mr. Herdman, Mr. Herries, Mr. Kidd, Mr. R. McKenzie, Mr. Millar, Hon. C. H. Mills, Mr. Moss, Mr. Reid, Right Hon. R. J. Seddon, Mr. Smith, Mr. Witheford, and the mover."—(Hon. Mr. McGOWAN.)

WEDNESDAY, THE 22ND DAY OF JULY, 1903.

*Ordered*, "That the Mining Act Amendment Bill be referred to the Goldfields and Mines Committee."

THURSDAY, THE 30TH DAY OF JULY, 1903.

*Ordered*, "That the Coal-mines Act Amendment Bill (No. 2) be referred to the Goldfields and Mines Committee."

## PETITION.

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled.

THE petition of the undersigned miners and workmen employed in gold and coal mining in the Provincial District of Auckland, New Zealand, humbly sheweth:—

1. That your petitioners are engaged in mining operations.

2. That the time workers are employed underground in each shift is at present too long, considering the unhealthy nature of the employment, and we respectfully ask that your honourable House will enact that forty-four (44) hours from surface to surface shall be the maximum time that an underground worker shall be employed in each week, to be divided into eight hours from surface to surface for five days in the week, and four hours from surface to surface on Saturdays.

We submit to your honourable House the following reasons for your consideration as to why you should give effect to our petition:—

(a.) Mine-air is heated naturally, since for every 60 ft. we descend from the surface after the first 50 ft. there is an increase in temperature of one degree, and the temperature is also further heated by the burning of lights, blasting operations, decaying timber, the presence of men and horses, underground gases, &c.

(b.) The principal gases met with in mines are, leaving out oxygen and nitrogen which compose fresh air—(1) carbon-monoxide, (2) carbon-dioxide, (3) sulphuretted hydrogen, (4) carburetted hydrogen.

(1.) Carbon-monoxide is a light gas, having no taste or smell, but being very poisonous, air containing 1 per cent. being fatal to life. This gas, which is known to miners as "white damp," is hard to detect, since lights will burn in it where men cannot live. It is found chiefly in badly ventilated mines where blasting operations are carried on.

- (2.) Carbon-dioxide is a heavy gas having a somewhat sharp odour and taste. It is known to miners as "choke damp" and "black damp," and, being heavy, a considerable current of air is required to remove it. It is formed by the breathing of men and horses, the burning of lights, and all blasting operations, and is also given off by certain rock-strata. Air containing any more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. is very unwholesome, and from 8 to 10 per cent. is absolutely fatal to life.
- (3.) Sulphuretted hydrogen is a more uncommon gas than the other two. Lights will not burn in it. It may be detected by its strong smell. It is given off by rotten timber, which is largely used in the mines, and other decaying matter, stagnant water, and human excrement. From 1 to 4 per cent. is fatal.
- (4.) Carburetted hydrogen, the "fire-damp" of coal-mines, is a light gas, forming when mixed with air a dangerous explosive mixture. It is found to a greater or less extent in all mines. The greatest explosive force is attained when the gas is diluted with air in the proportion of one part of gas to eight to thirteen parts of air.

(c.) The dust in mines is very injurious to the workers, and is to the largest extent responsible for the sickness amongst underground workers known as fibrosis of the lungs or "miners' disease," which is a disease different from "phthisis," though it resembles that disease closely, still having distinctive features.

(d.) Injuries to the knees from wrenches, working in cramped positions, and weight-lifting.

(e.) Rheumatic affections, including sciatica.

(f.) Heart-strain, through absence of proper ventilation and inhalement of poisonous gases under exertion.

The above are the principal reasons why we require the hours of labour underground to be restricted.

We might further add that, under the very best possible conditions that a mine can be worked, the employment will always be an unhealthy one.

We respectfully submit the above petition to the consideration of your honourable House.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

J. BAILEY AND OTHERS.

NOTE.—The different petitions are all in the same form.

## REPORTS.

### REPORT ON THE MINING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

THE Goldfields and Mines Committee, having taken evidence and given careful consideration to the provisions of the Mining Act Amendment Bill, have now the honour to report that, as in their judgment the rate of wages and the hours of labour in mines can be better dealt with in the Arbitration Court than by direct legislation, they recommend that the Bill be not allowed to proceed.

JAMES COLVIN, Chairman.

Parliament Buildings, 21st August, 1903.

### REPORT ON THE COAL-MINES ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2) BILL.

THE Goldfields and Mines Committee, to whom was referred the above-mentioned Bill, have the honour to report that, having taken evidence and carefully considered the provisions of the same, they recommend that the Bill be allowed to proceed subject to the amendments shown in a copy of the Bill attached hereto.

JAMES COLVIN, Chairman.

Parliament Buildings, 21st August, 1903.

REPORT on the PETITIONS of—No. 95, J. Bailey and 367 others; No. 385, E. A. Graham and 103 others; No. 383, A. Steele and 5 others on behalf of the Amalgamated Miners' Union, numbering 730 members; No. 380, Thomas Young and 246 others; No. 381, G. Newton and 208 others; No. 384, R. McMillan and 434 others; No. 382, E. Martin and 387 others; No. 379, J. Jenkins and 367 others.

PETITIONERS represent that the hours of labour for men employed underground in mines are too long, and they seek to have legislation passed whereby their hours of work may be reduced.

The Goldfields and Mines Committee have the honour to report on the above petitions that they recommend that the prayer of the petitioners be given effect to.

Parliament Buildings, 21st August, 1903.

JAMES COLVIN, Chairman.

### REPORTS ON THE MINING ACT AMENDMENT BILL AND THE COAL-MINES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

THE Goldfields and Mines Committee have the honour to report that they recommend that the evidence taken by them in connection with the Mining Act Amendment Bill and the Coal-mines Act Amendment Bill be printed.

JAMES COLVIN, Chairman.

Parliament Buildings, 3rd September, 1903.

## MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

THURSDAY, 6TH AUGUST, 1903.

HENRY ANDREW GORDON examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—Henry Andrew Gordon.
2. You are a mining engineer?—Yes, a mining sub-engineer.
3. Have you seen the Bills now before the Committee?—I have not read them.
4. Here are copies. [Produced and handed to witness.] Will you give us your opinion on the Gold-mining Bill first—the bank-to-bank provision?—The miners having to count their time from bank to bank will really mean, as far as a coal-mine is concerned, that a miner will work only six hours and a half a day. It will mean that coal will cost 7 per cent. more than before. I have gone into this very carefully, and, being a director of the Taupiri Coal Company, I can speak from experience. The public will have to pay for it, because no person is going to put capital into a mine to get no return from it. That will be the effect of the bank-to-bank provision in a coal-mine. It will have a greater effect in a gold-mine, for the simple reason that, as far as coal is concerned, you can put the extra expense on to the public, but in the case of a gold-mine you cannot do so. You can only get a certain rate; you cannot put any increased cost on to the price of the commodity, as you can do in an industrial undertaking. That is my opinion of the general principles of the Bill.
5. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Does your statement, that eight hours from bank to bank will mean that the miners will only work six hours and a half a day, apply to the Taupiri Coal-mine?—Yes.
6. Did you intend that statement to apply to that particular mine?—It applies to all mines pretty well on the same basis, for some coal-mines are different from others; it depends on whether their work is near the surface or not.
7. You say it applies pretty well to all coal-mines: will you explain to the Committee what you mean by that?—In general terms, it applies.
8. How wide would the generality be—an hour or an hour and a half?—An hour on an average would not make a generality. The bank-to-bank provision will mean this: The men are there, say, at 8 o'clock; it takes a certain time to go down the shaft and a certain time to walk to the work; and the same applies coming back. In addition to that, there is half an hour for crib in the middle of the day.
9. Do you know of your own knowledge whether they change shifts on the surface or underground at the Thames at present?—The change-house is on the surface at the Thames.
10. So that it would not make much difference there?—Yes, it would, for the simple reason that they have been accustomed to work eight hours underground at the face. They cannot possibly work eight hours at the face now if the time is to be eight hours from bank to bank, because there is half an hour for meal-time to come off.
11. I want to know whether you know of your own knowledge if they change shifts in the gold-mines at the Thames underground or on the surface?—The house for the changing of clothes is on the surface.
12. If they work three shifts at a mine, how can the men work more than eight hours?—It is only a paying gold-mine that works three shifts. Many mines it would not pay to work three.
13. I understood you to say that what you said in your opening statement applied pretty well to all coal-mines—that the men would work only six hours and a half: would that be the general effect on gold-mines working three shifts?—It would make a certain difference, but not as much difference as in coal-mines.
14. The difference of 7 per cent. that you mentioned?—It would not make the same difference in gold-mines as in coal-mines, because there is not the same distance to travel from the bottom of the shaft to the working-faces.
15. You have had large experience of mines, and I would like to ask you what effect working underground in gold-mines generally has on the men's health, speaking from your own experience?—It depends on the class of gold-mine that one works in. In a great many cases people working underground are not so liable to get rheumatics as those working on the surface.
16. What about what is known as miners' complaint?—A certain proportion of the miners get it—a sort of lung-complaint—but only a small proportion.
17. Do you think it is more prevalent among miners than among the general public?—I think that men employed in sluicing operations are just as much liable to rheumatics.
18. I was referring to men working underground—men using rock-drills, for instance, and blasting. Miners' complaint is contracted in dry quartz mines from the fumes of dynamite, &c. Do you think miners are more subject to it than an equal number of the average public on the surface?—Men on the surface when not working in water, as far as that is concerned. I say they are not so liable to it. The price for labour is more for working underground, as a rule.
19. Do you think that is on account of injury to health?—No.
20. What I want you to say is whether, from your experience, you consider quartz-miners who work in mines where there are large operations going on with rock-drills and explosives are more liable to miners' complaint than an equal number of people in ordinary vocations living on the surface?—Certainly they are more liable to it.
21. Are you aware that a very large percentage of young men suffer from this complaint after a few years in a mine?—I am not aware of that. Only a very small proportion of them suffer from it.
22. You keep up with the mining records of the world, I take it?—Yes.
23. Are you aware that the Chamber of Mines in Johannesburg have recently offered a bonus of £15,000 to any one who can provide a remedy, or a partial remedy, for that complaint?—No, I am not aware of it.
24. You have also had a large experience with coal-mines: do you consider coal-mining injurious to health?—Well, no; I do not think it injurious to health—not more so than is the case with any other class of men.

25. Do you think it more so than working on a farm?—It may be more so than that. I think that working on the surface and on a farm is very healthy as an occupation; but coal-mining is not more injurious to health, I think, than any other class of mining.

26. What about the risk that men run in coal-mining?—There is more risk.

27. Do you consider that time underground should be made as short as possible on account of the risk?—I do not think it would make the slightest difference in the risk run. That is really a question of looking after the mines.

28. We know that they are always supposed to be well looked after, but accidents do happen?—Some miners are very careless themselves.

29. Could we not reduce the risk by reducing the time worked by the men in mines?—I do not think that would make the slightest difference.

30. You advise the Government in connection with the State coal-mines?—Yes.

31. Do you think that if the Government adopt the eight hours from bank to bank it will cost them from 7 per cent. to 15 per cent. more if they do not allow the men their crib-time?—I think it will cost them 7 per cent. more, the same as any other owners.

32. How do you work that out?—It would be half an hour a day less.

33. It would only take fifteen minutes for crib?—I am afraid that if you had much to do in coal-mines you would know that it takes more than fifteen minutes.

34. I know a good deal, and I have evidence from miners all over the colony?—I have been connected with mining for forty years, and I have never known miners take less than half an hour.

35. Is it not a fact that most of the coal got in the colony now is won on piecework?—Some of it is got on piece, and some on wages; a great deal is on piece. A lot of the truckers and banksmen and others are on wages.

36. Are you familiar with the awards of the Arbitration Court?—I know what the award is governing the working of the mine that I am connected with.

37. But generally?—I do not know that I am particularly well acquainted with every award going. There are so many.

38. Supposing that the getting and the trucking is all done by piecework?—It is not done on piecework. We pay wages.

39. But I understand that yours is a very small mine?—The wages amount to £20,000 a year.

40. Take Denniston, for instance, or Millerton, or Blackball?—I believe they are trucking on contract there.

41. Would you not have considerable difficulty in proving, when all this is done on piecework, and if the men are prepared to forego their crib-time and leave it to the Arbitration Court to decide whether they should be paid the same or not—would you not find considerable difficulty in proving that coal would cost 7 per cent. more?—I do not think it would be advantageous for any employer to have a man work for eight hours without getting a meal.

42. But it is proposed the men should get a meal?—They could not take their meal and work at the same time.

43. But suppose they are firing shots; there is certain time lost in which they could have their crib?—You cannot always regulate firing shots to any particular time.

44. Suppose you tried?—You may do so, but you may lose more than you gain by it.

45. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] Have you heard any complaints from the miners in the North with regard to the ordinary working-hours in quartz mines?—I have not heard any word, and I do not think that if you made it five hours a day the miners would make a complaint.

46. Have you heard any complaints from the coal-miners in the North in regard to the hours of working?—No. They will not complain if you make it five hours.

47. *Mr. Witheford.*] With regard to changing, is it not usual for miners to go down and change at the face, one shift being there before the other shift leave off work, particularly on surface workings?—They are supposed so do so, but they do not carry it out. They generally leave the face when the time is up, whether the others are there or not.

48. Is it not customary for a new shift to go down to the face, take their instructions, and see what the other men are doing, being there five or ten minutes before the time?—No, it is not. It used to be, but it has been done away with.

49. With regard to African mining, is not the average mining there done at a much greater depth than in New Zealand?—I cannot speak as to the depth of the mines in Africa. In some of the mines here the depth is pretty great; it is 500 ft. at Waihi.

50. *Mr. J. Allen.*] With regard to clause 2 of the Mining Bill—"The word 'miner' where used in section nine of 'The Mining Act Amendment Act, 1902,' shall mean and include every workman employed underground in a mine"—do you mind telling us what would be the meaning of this alteration in the definition of the word "miner," in reference to both coal and gold mines? Are there others than actual coal-cutters and quartz-winners employed?—In both quartz and coal mines there are plenty of men employed in trucking—men who may go straight to it without having been in a mine before in their lives, and who would not be of any use as far as actually going to the face was concerned. You could not exactly call a man employed on trucking a miner in the ordinary sense of the word. I do not know what you might mean by saying every man is a miner who is employed in a mine.

51. Are not pumps, machinery, and all that kind of thing often used underground in both classes of mine?—Often.

52. Are men who are not miners in any sense of the word often sent down to look after these pumps and other machinery in these mines?—Men accustomed to machinery are sent down to look after it.

53. This Bill would include them all under the definition of "miner"?—Yes.

54. Have you seen clause 9 of the Act of 1902? What would be the meaning of that if they were all included under the definition of "miner"?—There are times when a man whom you have to work eight hours a day is not working half his time—a man doing repairs, laying rods, repairing machinery, and everything of that sort.

55. If this clause were passed would it not mean that an underviewer, a fireman, or a deputy, or anybody who went down to look after pumps, or a trucker, a carpenter, or any hands other

than actual coal-cutters or quartz-winners, would be included as miners, and be subject to an eight-hours-from-bank-to-bank regulation?—Yes.

56. What has a deputy got to do?—To go down before the men go into the mine at all, and go round to all the working-faces, and leave word on a board on which he chalks that it is safe for the men to enter before they do so; and he is the last man to leave the mine at night.

57. Would he be able to do that if the clause were amended in the way proposed?—No, not without being paid overtime.

58. There are cases, I suppose, when firemen have to go below?—Yes.

59. Would they go before the miners, as a rule?—Yes.

60. And if this clause were amended they would have to be paid overtime?—Yes.

61. Would that be different to what exists now?—Yes, certainly.

62. Would it make the wages higher?—Yes.

63. And the cost of getting the coal more?—Whatever the wages were, the men would have to be paid overtime.

64. With regard to truckers in coal-mines—and, I suppose, in gold-mines too—in some cases, I suppose, they are paid by piecework?—By piecework and wages in both quartz and coal mines.

65. There are a great many instances, I suppose, where they are paid by day wages?—Yes. A great number, I think, in quartz-mines are on wages; but in coal-mines a good deal of the coal-getting is done on piecework.

66. In cases where the truckers were paid a day wage, what would be the effect of eight hours from bank to bank?—I would really mean that the coal would cost a good deal more to produce.

67. And the gold, too?—Yes.

68. Is it a fact that coal-miners are employed on piecework all over New Zealand?—Not all of them.

69. Some are employed on day wages?—There are plenty employed on day wages, because in all the Arbitration Court awards that I have seen there is a provision that if you want men to do some particular class of work you must pay them so-much day wages.

70. Do all the Arbitration Court awards fix so-much a day for day wages?—Yes. And the same with truckers.

71. You are a director of a coal-mine?—Yes.

72. Have you lately had an award of the Arbitration Court, or entered into an industrial agreement with the men?—Since last year we have had another award.

73. Was it an award made by the Court, or an industrial agreement?—An award of the Court.

74. Did this question crop up at all?—Yes; but the eight hours from bank to bank was put into the Mining Act, and we had to agree to that.

75. What was your award?—We have to abide by the eight hours from bank to bank, and it costs us 7 per cent. more to get coal than it did previously.

76. That is your experience?—Yes.

77. You are working eight hours from bank to bank now under that award?—Yes.

78. What effect on the day wages had that award of eight hours from bank to bank—any?—It had an effect.

79. Did the Court, in fixing the day wage, fix it at the same rate?—Yes, we pay the same rate as before.

80. It has affected the price of coal?—Yes, 7 per cent.

81. You say that the eight hours from bank to bank will mean in coal-mines six hours and a half a day actual coal-getting?—That is so. It does with us.

82. How do you make that out?—You start, we will say, at 8 o'clock. The men assemble then. It takes a quarter of an hour to get all the men down, and it takes fully fifteen or twenty minutes for the men to get to the faces; and then they come back for crib, and it takes the same time to get out again. It means six hours and a half actual coal-getting.

83. Where do they come back for crib-time?—They come back from the face some distance, and generally meet together.

84. What difference will eight hours from bank to bank make in a gold-mine?—It will increase the cost of gold, and you cannot possibly get any higher price for it. It is really putting a tax on, which I am afraid will frighten capital away from entering into gold-mining. In coal-mining you can put the extra cost on to the price of coal, but in gold-mining you cannot. If you do not get the gold to pay for the extra cost you cannot work the mine. It increases the cost of working a gold-mine.

85. Coming back to the hands employed, a number of hands are employed on the surface?—Yes.

86. Is it the custom now to pay them for an eight-hours-day's work?—Yes.

87. How will this eight hours affect the men on the top?—It does not affect them with us, because we have been able to find other work for them to do, such as clearing away. We cannot sell all the refuse coal; there is a certain amount of slack that we have to get clear of.

88. Are there instances where you can imagine the surfacemen would be affected by the shorter hours underground?—There may be some instances; there is no doubt that if the employers could not find employment for them they would have to waste time.

89. Can you employ truckers underground all the time?—No.

90. Then they are wasting time?—Yes. It makes a difference in the trucking underground.

91. You have a very wide experience of mining generally?—Yes.

92. Do mines differ a great deal as regards their capacity for employing men—I mean as regards ventilation and conveniences for work?—Yes, there is a great difference in that.

93. Some mines are better to work in, and well ventilated?—Some mines are much easier to work in than others.

94. Others are not so well ventilated, and the working is not so convenient?—That is so.

95. Would it be fair, then, to make a hard-and-fast rule with regard to all mines?—You could not carry it out, because, as far as ventilation is concerned, there are times when you will get into gas which you do not expect. You cannot make a hard-and-fast rule.

96. So far as the men are concerned, would it be wise to make a hard-and-fast rule by law?—I do not think so.

97. You know the object of the Arbitration Court?—Yes.

98. Is it to consider such instances as I have suggested—the difference in mines and employment?—I think it ought to be left to the Arbitration Court. I think that would give satisfaction to both employer and employee.

99. The Arbitration Court is in a position to take all the circumstances into consideration?—Yes.

100. And to allot to one man eight hours from bank to bank, to another seven hours if necessary, and to alter the wages if necessary?—Yes. I think it would be better to leave it to the Arbitration Court.

101. You were asked by Mr. McKenzie some questions about the health of miners. Did you read the evidence that was placed before the Committee last year?—I believe I did.

102. There was given in evidence before the Committee a table of comparative mortality for men in all occupations between twenty-five and sixty-five years of age. I will recall it to your memory by asking you to look at it. [Handed to witness.] Tell us what the heading of the table is?—“Comparative Mortality of Males, Twenty-five to Sixty-five Years of Age, in Different Occupations, from All Causes, for the Years 1890–92, all Males being taken at 1,000, England and Wales.”

103. Will you tell us the mortality in the case of a coal-miner?—925.

104. As compared with that, the mortality of a quarryman is?—1,176.

105. Which, therefore, of those two is the occupation which is most liable to cause death between those two ages—from twenty-five to sixty-five?—I am not sure of the way the percentage goes here.

106. The average of males is taken at 1,000?—Yes.

107. Is the quarryman over the average?—Yes.

108. There is more mortality amongst quarrymen than amongst average males?—Yes.

109. Is the coal-miner above or below the average?—Considerably below. I notice that a file-maker's goes to 1,810.

110. You know what a file-maker's work is?—Yes.

111. Is it not very dangerous?—Yes, it goes 1,810. A mason's is more than a coal-miner's.

112. On the next page you will find the statistics for Scotland. What is the average of the coal and shale miner there?—973.

113. Below the average?—Yes.

114. What is the mason?—1,400.

115. A long way above the average?—Yes. The miner seems to be about the medium in all cases.

116. Do these tables show that coal-mining is an occupation which is more liable to mortality than ordinary occupations?—It seems to be about the average.

117. If anything, a little under?—Yes.

118. Now, abandoning the tables for the time being, will you give us your own experience with regard to mortality amongst miners?—I do not think there is any more mortality than there is in other occupations. I think it is by a long way a more healthy occupation than working in a sluicing claim on the surface.

119. With regard to the alteration in the hours of work from the existing arrangements to eight hours from bank to bank: at most of the mines do they work one shift or three?—I think the greater portion of the mines work one shift. It is really at only large mines where they work three.

120. So that if they work on three shifts there is no possibility of making up for lost time?—No possibility.

121. With regard to clause 3 of the Mining Bill: that would cut out the words “or hereafter” from the first line of section 9 of last year's Act. It would mean that it would take out of the hands of the Arbitration Court altogether the settling of the question of the time and fix it by statute?—Yes.

122. And that would apply to all mines, whether badly ventilated or not?—Yes. I think it would be much better to leave it to the Court. Every one has got accustomed to the settling of disputes by the Conciliation and Arbitration Act, and it much better to let everything be settled by the Court.

123. I would like to ask you a few questions about the Coal-miners' Relief Fund, mentioned in clause 3 of Mr. Colvin's Bill. Do you know about that?—Yes.

124. Will you explain to us briefly what it is?—Coal-miners' relief is obtained from  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. or  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a ton that the owners pay, and this goes into a relief fund.

125. Was that introduced before the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act came into existence?—Yes.

126. Do you think that the latter covers the same ground to a large extent?—I think the employers ought to be relieved of this altogether when they are subject to the Compensation for Accidents Act.

127. Why?—For the simple reason that it is putting a deal more upon us. We have a deal more risk to take under the Workers' Compensation Act.

128. Does the Compensation for Accidents Act cover the ground to a large extent that was covered by the Coal-miners' Fund?—It covers far more. It costs us far more to insure the men now than before.

129. Does the Compensation for Accidents Act cover the ground that was covered by this fund to provide for injury?—Yes; I think Compensation for Accidents covers the same thing.

130. So there is no necessity for keeping the fund up?—I do not see any necessity.

131. Are you aware that when insuring, either with the Government Accident Insurance Department or any company, they will only insure you up to a limited amount?—Yes.

132. And that beyond that you have to take all the risk yourself?—Yes.

133. Would it not be a fair thing, if this clause were not repealed as you suggest, to utilise the money to cover what you cannot cover now by insurance?—I think it would be a very good thing to do.

134. What would happen in the case of a coal-mine owner who was not a wealthy man, but who had insured his employees, if a big disaster occurred and he was unable to meet any demand other than the insurance demand?—It would ruin him entirely.

135. But what would happen to the men if he had no money to pay them?—They could not get it.

136. This fund, if set up, would be a means out of which they could be paid?—Yes; but I think the employers ought to be relieved from paying into that fund altogether.

137. You think it should be repealed?—Yes.

138. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] With regard to the Miners' Accident Relief Fund, if the definition of "miner" was altered as proposed in the Bill and all the others who are not now brought in under the definition were included, what effect would that have on the present Relief Fund?—I think that any one employed in a mine at the present time gets relief from that fund if necessary.

139. No, for all are not miners?—If it were only the actual miners it would make a great deal of difference.

140. They would require to make a higher contribution in order to maintain the present assistance that they get?—Yes.

141. If you increase the number of men who come under the definition of "miner" you must necessarily either reduce the amount payable to those who receive assistance, or you must increase the amount of the fund by a higher charge?—Yes.

142. *Mr. J. Allen.*] There would be more claims on the fund?—Yes.

143. *The Chairman.*] You know the mines on the West Coast?—Yes.

144. What distance has a miner to walk in the Westport Coal Company's Denniston mine till he gets to the face?—Some of the men take twenty minutes.

145. Do you not think it is as hard on the miner to get to the face when he has to carry his tools and go over rough ground as it is to work?—The men only walk themselves. A man has to walk a long distance, in some cases, when working on the surface.

146. Have you heard any expression of opinion from the miners that they wish to get the bank-to-bank clause?—I have heard that they want it; they would want to get only six hours a day if you would give it to them.

147. If the words "or hereafter" were struck out, as provided for in Mr. McKenzie's Bill, and the eight hours from bank to bank introduced, would not the Arbitration Court have power at the present day to fix the rate of wages for miners at a lower figure? Would not the Court have power to fix the hewing-rate, and the rate of wages for truckers, and everything connected with a mine, at a lower rate?—There would have to be something brought very clearly against the men to get the Arbitration Court to lower the wages.

148. Are you aware that the miners have stated before the Committee that they would be willing to submit to a lower rate of wages if the Arbitration Court decided against them?—All such matters should be left to the Arbitration Court, for the simple reason that some mines are worse to work in than others. I refer to the wages, and everything in connection with the hours of labour. It would give greater satisfaction, I can tell you, to the employers, and I believe to a majority of the miners, if everything was decided by the Court.

149. Are you aware that the miners are anxious for Parliament to fix the time at eight hours per day, leaving it to the Arbitration Court to fix any reduced hours in bad mines, as you say; and if the Arbitration Court thinks it is likely to raise the price of coal, or to do a serious injury to the mine-owners, the men are willing to leave it to the Court to fix the rate of pay, possibly at a lower figure? Therefore, if they fix the rate of pay at a lower wage your company would not lose the 7 per cent. that you mentioned?—It is this: some miners might come here and say they would take lower wages, but my experience of miners has been that they would want higher wages and less hours.

150. But they say they are willing to leave it to the Arbitration Court. What I want to impress on you is that the miners want us to fix eight hours from bank to bank by statute, leaving it to the Court to fix the rate of pay and the shorter hours for bad workings. Are you aware of that?—There is one thing that I want to say to the Committee as far as the price of coal is concerned: it is only to a certain limit that we can go, because we have Newcastle coal to compete with, and Newcastle coal can be admitted into the colony without paying duty or anything, and we have to produce coal against it.

151. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Would you mind looking at that mortality table, compiled by Mr. Barrowman, on page 77. I suppose you cast your eye over vital statistics now and again. Did you ever see a mortality table anywhere else compiled like this one?—I could not answer that question right off.

152. Can you really say what this table expresses?—As far as mining is concerned I believe that it is an average occupation.

153. Is it not a fact that the way the table is compiled and printed is sufficient to show that whoever compiled it knew nothing about the subject?—I would not say that.

154. If this Committee asked you to compile a table of mortality that any one could understand, would you express it like this?—I do not know. If the compiler got this from statistics I think it expresses the mortality rates pretty well. It is a question of collecting statistics. I could not say without going into the matter.

155. Would you not express a percentage per thousand?—You could do it in that way, but he has preferred another way.

156. You say that the price of coal would have to be increased by the eight hours from bank to bank?—There is no doubt about it.

157. Are you aware that the price of coal has gone up in the last ten years?—Yes; but so have wages.

158. What has been the increase in the price of coal in New Zealand in the last ten years?—I could not tell you exactly. I know it has increased.

159. Do you know whether it has increased materially—say 50 per cent.?—No, not that.

160. Twenty-five per cent.?—I cannot say the percentage.

161. Do you know what the price of coal in Westport is now, which regulates the price of coal for the colony, I take it? Suppose it has gone up from 10s. a ton on board ship at Westport

to 17s. 6d.?—It does not leave much for taking it to Auckland. It depends upon the market to a great extent.

162. But free on board ship; it does not matter about the competition?—I could not tell you.

163. Are you aware that the men who hew the coal, and probably the truckers also, get less than they did ten or twelve years ago?—I could not tell you that.

164. With regard to the definition of "miner": you know the mining laws of this colony intimately. Do you know of any mining law in which there is a definition of "miner" except this particular clause that was passed last year?—I should certainly not call a boy going into a mine to truck a "miner."

165. Excepting in this clause there is no general definition in any law of the colony, is there?—That is where I think the objection comes in. In order to be a miner a man must learn his business exactly the same as in any other business.

166. You reckon that overtime would have to be paid to the deputy or a fireman to carry out his work. Is it not a fact that they get better wages than the ordinary wages paid in the mine—they get special pay for performing special duty?—They get a little more pay.

167. You said in answer to Mr. Allen that the deputy and the fireman would have to work overtime. Suppose you reduce the time that the miners work by fifteen minutes, would they get any more pay than now?—They would be entitled to more.

168. Because you reduce the time?—You do not reduce the time, because the deputies have to be in the mine in some instances an hour, and in some more, before the men enter.

169. Suppose that the men are working, as you say, an hour and a half less—I say fifteen minutes less—do you think the deputy would have to be paid any more than he is at present because the time the men would be at work would be less?—Most undoubtedly he would. He would claim overtime for more than eight hours' work.

170. Do you think he would want to be paid more than at present?—Yes; he would want certain overtime.

171. Why?—For the simple reason that eight hours would be defined by legislation, and he would say, "I am entitled to overtime."

172. But is he not paid now?—Not for overtime. He gets a certain wage.

173. Would that overtime that he would want to be paid amount, with his wages, to more than he is getting now?—I think so.

174. Why?—You can pass as much legislation as you have a mind to, but the miners themselves will want as much wages if you make their hours an hour less, and so will the deputy, because the deputy is a man who has to be in the mine for a long time, and he is entitled to more wages than an actual miner. If the eight hours a day applied to other men the deputy would require to be paid overtime.

175. You said that labour legislation was shortening the hours of labour and frightening capital out of the colony?—I said, as far as gold-mining was concerned, if you shorten the hours of labour you cannot put the extra cost of production on to any other people. You have to depend entirely upon the price you get for your gold. It affects the gold-mining industry more than any other industry you have got.

176. Your opinion is that this kind of legislation has the effect of driving money out of the colony?—I can speak from what I am told by people I was connected with for some years in London—that this labour legislation has the effect in the London market of keeping capital from the colony.

177. Do you not think that it is as important to every miner in the colony that the mines should be kept fully at work, and the investment of capital in mining should be encouraged as much as possible?—Yes.

178. Do you not think the miners are as much interested in that phase of the question as any mining speculator?—The miner generally wants as much money as he can get—

179. So does the investor. You are not aware of any case in which the miners or the miners' union have tried to close any mine, are you?—I do not know of that.

180. Are you aware of any cases in which their actions have had a tendency to do so?—The miners' unions, I can tell you, are pretty hard on some of the mines. They want to force the companies to work when they have not the money to work with.

181. But you cannot cite any case in which their actions have tended to close mines?—They tend that way, at any rate.

182. You say that it is not advisable to make a hard-and-fast rule with regard to eight hours from bank to bank?—I think it would do an injury to the colony to make a hard-and-fast rule when we have the Arbitration Court. It ought to decide about the hours of labour and the wages in every mine, because mines are so different from one another.

183. Do you think this proposal makes a hard-and-fast rule?—Yes.

184. How?—It makes it a hard-and-fast rule that any man who goes into a mine is entitled to work only eight hours, and be paid overtime if he works more.

185. In regard to the hewing-rate for coal, is it not left to the Arbitration Court, even if this becomes law, to fix the hewing-rate and trucking-rate?—I think it will be a hard job for the Arbitration Court to attempt to put down wages. The men will want some other legislation to keep them up.

186. The Arbitration Court has reduced the miners' wages on more than one occasion?—Not in our district.

187. There is no hard-and-fast rule made as far as the Arbitration Court is concerned, is there?—It is a hard-and-fast rule. It is taking power out of the Arbitration Court's hands that ought to be there.

188. This proposal would take away the power by fixing an eight-hours day?—Yes.

189. But the power to fix the wages for that day would still be in the hands of the Court?—Yes, but it is increasing the wages, for the simple reason that you cannot get the wages down.

190. That is a matter for future decision?—That is my experience.

191. *The Chairman.*] You say that the Arbitration Court will not reduce wages?—I do not believe it will.



192. Is it not set up to do what it considers fair between the employer and employee?—If the Court settles all differences between the miners and their employers I do not see that legislation ought to take power out of its hands. If it was a good thing to start with it is a good thing to carry on. It would give far more satisfaction to employers, and, I am certain, the majority of the miners—some of them, at any rate—if the Court settled all disputes.

193. But the Court has reduced the rate of wages in different parts of the colony?—Not in the part I come from.

194. It has in Reefton?—No; it did not reduce them in Reefton.

195. Are you aware that a miner got 10s. a day in Reefton at one time?—Yes, and 8s. too in some mines; it made 9s. an average day's wage.

196. For miners working inside the mine; but the men in every mine in Reefton previous to the Arbitration Court got 10s. a day?—No.

197. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] The particulars are given at the end of the printed evidence taken last year. There is a copy, on page 81, of the agreement between several companies and the miners. The rate of wages is set out.

198. *The Chairman.*] Are you not aware, Mr. Gordon, that previous to the Arbitration Court being set up the miners on the West Coast, as a rule, got higher wages than at the present day?—I have paid far higher wages on the West Coast than those now paid, but that was years ago. I can tell you this: as far as the coal-mine owners are concerned, their property has gone down, and a great many of them cannot write off anything for depreciation.

199. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] You say that property has gone down. I can prove that properties in this colony have gone up?—I say, some of them.

200. The Westport Coal Company's shares were only £2 10s. a few years ago, but they are now £7 4s.?—I am only speaking of some.

FRIDAY, 7TH AUGUST, 1903.

GEORGE FLETCHER examined. (No. 2.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—George Fletcher.

2. You reside at Granity Creek?—Yes.

3. You are manager for the Westport Coal Company at Millerton?—Yes.

4. Have you seen my Bill, which is now before the Committee?—Yes.

5. Will you kindly make a statement of your opinion of what the effect of this Bill will be?—That is, your Bill?

6. Yes. You do not understand anything about the Mining Bill?—Not much, except with regard to the employment of men. I would like to give you an outline of what is being done at the present time at our place and at Denniston with reference to the Medical Association. At present the men have a doctor. He is appointed by the colliery-owners, and the men pay 1s. per week each. The company subsidise their funds £100 a year, besides finding a house, a horse, its keep, and a groom, which amount to over £200 altogether.

7. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Including the £100, or without it?—Including the £100. That obtains at Denniston as well as at Millerton; so that the company really pay over £400 towards the Medical Association's funds. I take the Bill to mean that the workmen will have full and absolute control over the doctor, even to his appointment; and you are asking us to deduct from the men's earnings the amounts they may from time to time say are to be deducted. We are to have no say in the doctor. In my opinion this innovation will cause trouble with the men, because they will not, I am afraid, be able to keep a respectable man very long with them if he is to be under the control of the men. I know that the position of colliery doctor is one of the worst positions a man can occupy when he has a body of men to deal with. A clique of them is formed, and they say, "We do not like that man." If there were four doctors down there now all of them would get a certain amount of custom from the men, and there would never be any peace. Moreover, you are penalising the men at the two mines to the extent of over £400 a year. By this Bill you will just give them full control over the doctor. The work that the doctors are doing now is giving every satisfaction, both at Denniston and Millerton. There is not a word of complaint about their services and attention. You are wanting the owners to deduct the money from the wages of the men by the Bill. We put the services of the doctors entirely in their hands, and they can do anything. It gives a doctor no standing in a district when he is under working-men. There is no security for a man. The miners could not get a respectable man to come if he was not recognised by the colliery-owners and felt that he had some security. The object of our directors has been to get respectable men to look after the interests of the working-men and their families. We had a little trouble a few months ago with reference to the appointment of a doctor. The men did not want the company to appoint the doctor. Then the committee of the Medical Association came down from Denniston and interviewed the committee of the Granity association, and the Denniston men advised them that, whatever they did, let the appointment be made by the company, the same as it is with us. We have had no trouble since. Again, if the money is to be deducted at the office it gives the men no option. They may say, "We are dissatisfied with that doctor," but they must pay to him. That is taking away the liberty of a workman. Here is a registered miners' association, and whatever motions are passed every member must abide by. Half a dozen men may say, "I am not satisfied with that doctor. He is not giving sufficient time to us. I would like to have another." If there was another in the place—and there has been one for a few months trying to get a little practice together—they would go to him. But they would find that the deductions would be too great for them to bear—2s. for the recognised doctor a fortnight, and 2s. for another doctor—and they could not keep them up. Therefore it would interfere with the liberty of the working-man. I do not think I can say anything more to enlighten you upon that question. I think it is plain that if the clauses in Mr. Colvin's Bill pass you will be penalising the men and taking away freedom from them.

8. *The Chairman.*] Do you wish to say anything with regard to the bank-to-bank provision?—Yes. This bank-to-bank business means that it is going to reduce our output nearly 7 per cent. in the year. How are we going to be compensated for that? The hours that are being worked

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.

25. Take the mechanics: would it have the same effect on them?—No, it would not affect the mechanics. It would only affect those working underground.

26. Yes, but would not the mechanics be compelled to be only eight hours from bank to bank?—Yes. If a mechanic had to go and do any work in a mine—say there was work for three or four weeks—he would only go in as an ordinary miner to his work.

27. Would that reduce his hours of labour?—Yes; he would then come under the same heading as a miner.

28. Would the reduction of the hours of labour of the truckers to eight hours from bank to bank interfere with the getting-out of your coal?—The reduction in the hours of truckers, fillers, drivers, and rope-road boys would be made with all at the same time. They would all be reduced.

29. Are you working now, when in full going-order, to the full capacity of your rope?—We are.

30. If your rope was, therefore, stopped for half an hour, and during the hours the men were working they increased their output, could you take the stuff away from them?—No, we could not.

31. So that if, as is claimed, in a shorter-time's work at the face, a miner could put out what he is putting out now in a longer time, could you take the stuff away from him?—We could not.

32. Under your existing award, how long does a miner now work at the face in your mine?—All the workmen underground have to be at their places at 8 o'clock in the morning to commence work, and they cease at five minutes to 4. In that time there is half an hour for crib.

33. Is a miner at the face, coal-getting, seven hours and twenty-five minutes?—Yes, seven hours twenty-five minutes.

34. If this Coal-mines Bill is passed, what will be the hours worked at the face then?—Half an hour a day less than at present.

35. Six hours and fifty-five minutes?—It would mean that the rope would be running six hours fifty-five minutes instead of seven hours twenty-five minutes.

36. The miners cannot work when the rope is not running?—No.

37. So that the miners could not work more than six hours and fifty-five minutes at the face?—Certainly not. They could be in the face seven hours twenty-five minutes.

38. That includes crib-time?—Exactly.

39. I mean, with crib-time taken off—the actual coal-hewing time?—Six hours fifty-five minutes.

40. What is your experience of the effect of his occupation upon a miner's health here in New Zealand?—Miners are a healthy class of men.

41. Mortality is not greater amongst them than amongst others?—No.

42. Are they a strong, healthy lot as a rule?—Yes.

43. Stronger than other men as a rule?—As strong a class of men as you would meet with.

44. Do you work one shift, or more?—Two.

45. What would be the effect of the Bill on two shifts?—It would reduce our output about 28,000 tons a year in the two shifts at the Millerton Mine.

46. What about the other mine?—About 14,000 tons.

47. Forty-two thousand tons altogether?—Yes.

48. Do you work mostly by piecework?—No, it is all day work, except the few coal-hewers.

49. How many?—Thirty-six altogether.

50. How many on machines?—I could not tell you exactly.

51. How are your machine-men paid?—A machine-man gets 11s. a day.

52. He is a day-wages man?—Yes; and the boys who cast the slack back average about 7s. a day.

53. They are on day wages too?—Yes.

54. So that the bulk of your work is done on day wages?—Yes.

55. If the time for working were shortened, as is suggested under this Bill, what do you think would be the effect upon the men's wages in the event of a case being taken to the Arbitration Court? If the hours were as provided by the Bill, and the men went to the Court, what do you think the Court would say?—I cannot say, I am sure. I know what there should be—a reduction of 5 or 6 per cent. in wages, to make up for the lost time.

56. With regard to the provision in the Bill as to the medical officer: do you know if there has been any real demand from the men for it?—I have not heard a word about the doctor; I have not heard of a word being breathed as to dissatisfaction with the doctor.

57. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Are you speaking about Denniston or Millerton now?—I am speaking of both.

58. For how many years?—The last twelve months.

59. *Mr. J. Allen.*] There is a clause in this Coal-mines Bill—clause 3—dealing with the Coal-miners' Relief Fund. You pay now to the Coal-miners' Relief Fund, do you not?—Yes,  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton.

60. Are there claims upon that fund now?—Yes, a few claims.

61. Are these claims that are made upon you now out of the fund also made under the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act?—Yes.

62. The men claim under both?—Yes.

63. And do they get paid under both?—Yes.

64. The amount they are paid under the Coal-miners' Relief Fund is not deducted from the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Fund, is it?—Oh, no.

65. The men are therefore paid the full amount they are entitled to under the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act, and the full amount they are entitled to from the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a ton?—Yes.

66. Who pays the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a ton?—The company.

67. Do you think there is any necessity for that fund to remain in existence now that the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act is in operation?—No.

68. Does the Compensation for Accidents cover the same ground?—It does, I believe.

69. Do you know of any cases in which men have received from these two sources and from their own relief funds amounts equivalent to their actual wages?—Yes.

70. Do you know of more than one case?—I can give you two in which the men received close upon what they were earning. We have men receiving £5 a fortnight out of relief funds.

71. Out of which?—They get £1 5s. a fortnight each from the Medical Association.

72. That is their own?—Yes; and £1 5s. a fortnight from the  $\frac{1}{4}$ d.-a-ton fund, and 50 per cent. of their wages from the Workers' Compensation for Accidents.

73. *Mr. Herries.*] Are you still working under the same award as when you gave evidence last year?—Yes, under the same award.

74. When does it run out?—On the 31st of next March.

75. Was the subject of bank-to-bank considered when the award was made. I forget now whether you told us last time?—It was.

76. How was it decided?—It was a give-and-take arrangement, suggested by the President, Judge Cooper. We used to run coal down the incline fully eight hours a day. Now, if it had to be eight hours from bank to bank exclusive of meal-time, our men could not travel to the workings if they commenced to enter the mine at the mine-mouth, but if they walked over the hill to the adit next to the far-off mine they could do it in a less time. But we were afraid that if we compelled the men to travel over to Mine Creek on wet days—and we have a lot of rain—they would not be at work, and it would be a loss to them and to us, because they could not travel over the hill in wet weather. Terms were made that the men should be at their places ready to work at 8 o'clock in the morning, and cease at five minutes to 4. That overcame the difficulty.

77. There was an agreement between yourselves and the men?—It was mutually agreed upon, at the suggestion of the President of the Court.

78. How many hours do the men actually work underground?—They are at the face seven hours fifty-five minutes.

79. They are at present more than eight hours underground, including travelling-time?—Yes.

80. *Mr. J. Allen.*] A quarter of an hour going in and a quarter of an hour going out?—Yes.

81. *Mr. Herries.*] Are there many complaints?—I have not heard a complaint about it—not until this Bill was sent to me by our official at Wellington.

82. Do I understand you to say that the time the men are working underground now is a part of their agreement with you?—Yes. It was mutually agreed between the men and the management after it was suggested by the President of the Arbitration Court.

83. You think that if the words "or hereafter" are struck out it will affect the future awards of the Court?—Yes, it will. The matter should be settled by the Arbitration Court.

84. You would rather have it settled by the Court than by Act of Parliament?—Yes, because when you go before the Court evidence can be given which you cannot get here, and both sides are able to explain to the Judge, and you can effect a compromise. When the Judge sees a way out of it and makes a suggestion, we try to agree to his suggestion, without causing friction. I think the Arbitration Court ought to settle the hours as well as the wages. It seems strange for the hours to be dealt with at one place and the wages at another.

85. *Mr. Bennet.*] I do not remember if Mr. Allen asked you what wages the coal-hewers get?—Our hewers make big wages; they make 19s. a day. But understand that that is owing to the fact of our having few hewers, and that they are working at the nearest portion of the mine. If the whole time was being worked the average for the coal-hewers would not be so large. It is by having a few coal-hewers in that section that they can always get plenty of tubs to fill. We are extracting the pillars there.

86. What do those who are paid day wages get—those hewing coals, not working the machines?—They are paid by the ton, and make 19s. a day each.

87. They are pieceworkers?—Yes.

88. Has there been any agitation amongst the men for this Bill?—I never heard a word about it.

89. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] They did not ask you to sign a large petition?—They asked me to sign nothing, nor did they speak to me about it, nor yet have I heard anything mooted. Even Mr. Colvin, our respected representative, did not tell us about it in his pre-sessional speeches, so that we could have guided him not to bother with it.

90. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] What are the conditions at the present time under which the men obtaining coal are working with reference to ventilation and conditions of labour?—You could not go to a colliery in the Southern Hemisphere, nor yet in the Old Country, better ventilated and more easily worked than ours.

91. Have you any knowledge of any other mines than your own in New Zealand?—I have not.

92. As to the Inspectors, are they attentive and careful to the requirements of proper ventilation, proper conditions of working, and everything connected with the safety of life and property?—With regard to the Inspector in our district, there could not be a more careful man than Mr. Tennent.

93. If the definition of "miner" was altered to include every man working in, on, or about a mine, that would be likely to increase the number of those who would be subject to receiving assistance from the Accident Fund?—I understand that all men working in a mine participate in the  $\frac{1}{4}$ d.-a-ton allowance. Is that what you mean?

94. Yes. Supposing a carpenter was down there and he met with an accident?—I suppose he would expect assistance.

95. I do not think he would get it?—He would try for it. It could scarcely be refused.

96. You are of opinion that it is better to leave the question of hours to be decided by the Court, as at present, than to alter the hours by this Bill?—I think it better. I do.

97. *Mr. B. McKenzie.*] The Minister of Mines asked you as to the qualification and method of administration of the Inspector of Mines. What was your reply?—That we could not have a better Inspector.

98. Are you in the habit of flattering the Inspector now and again?—I do not flatter any man.

99. Supposing your managing director went to the president of the Denniston Union and asked him how you managed the mine, would that be placing you in a pleasant position?—I do not think my directors would do a thing like that.

100. Then do you think it right for the Minister of Mines to ask you that question?—I see no harm in it. I did not know it was the Minister who was asking me the question.

101. I will examine you on the Gold-mines Bill first, because you pretend to know a great deal about it?—No; I know nothing about it.

102. What do you know about quartz mining?—Nothing.

103. Have you ever worked in a quartz mine?—Never.

104. Have you ever been down a quartz mine?—No; I never saw a gold-mine in my life.

105. But you come here and give evidence with regard to it?—If I am asked to give evidence I can do it to the best of my ability.

106. Do you consider yourself qualified to give evidence about a quartz mine when you never saw one?—I leave that to you, gentlemen. I am capable of saying that men engaged with pumps, or attending to horses down a pit, or to the machinery in a mine, should not be classed as miners. That is all I have to say about it.

107. You say that you have thirty-six coal-hewers. Does that mean the hewers employed by the Westport Coal Company?—No; the number at Millerton.

108. Am I to understand that you are here to represent the Westport Coal Company as far as their works are concerned?—Yes, I suppose so.

109. Are you an expert coal-miner?—Do you mean as regards getting coal?

110. I mean in any way you like to take it—as the term is generally understood?—I am a colliery-manager by profession, having served my time to it.

111. Have you ever worked in a coal-mine?—Yes.

112. What doing?—Anything.

113. What do you call "anything"?—All things.

114. Were you ever hewing coal?—No, never.

115. Have you ever passed the examination that is necessary in order to get a mine-manager's certificate in this colony?—Not in this colony, but I did at Home.

116. You are practically not a mine-manager in this colony at all?—I am a mining manager.

117. You are really the surface manager?—I look after the general work. There is a certificated manager under me, to comply with the Act.

118. As a matter of fact, there is another coal-mine manager at Millerton besides you?—Yes, he is the certificated manager.

119. Is he the man who is liable to the law in the event of accident?—Yes, he is liable to the law.

120. Is it a fact that you are not the mine-manager at Millerton at all?—I am the mine-manager.

121. But not the mine-manager according to law?—Not the certificated mining manager.

122. I understand your position thoroughly, but so that the House of Representatives shall not be misled, I want your position defined clearly. If there was an accident in that mine you would not be responsible?—No, I am not responsible as regards the connection between the Government and the mine-manager.

123. You are not responsible to the law?—I do not think so.

124. Consequently you are not responsible for the men's health?—Oh, yes; I feel myself bound to be responsible for that.

125. It is your legal position I want to get at?—I am there to see that the man who is responsible carries out the Act in its entirety.

126. If the men have a complaint to make about the ventilation of the mine, according to law, or according to the mining regulations, whom do they make it to?—Very likely they would make it to me or to the mine-manager.

127. Whom would the men be compelled to make their complaint to, according to the law and the mining regulations?—The mine-manager.

128. And that is not yourself?—Just so.

129. Coming to another point: You told us that if this small concession was granted your company could not compete with Newcastle coal. Do you remember that?—I said that it was well to look ahead against outside markets, for fear that we should be having a large influx of Newcastle, if our mines were reducing their output.

130. Do you know the quantity of Newcastle coal coming to this colony?—Yes, I think I can tell you pretty nearly.

131. What do you think it is?—A little under 300,000 tons a year.

132. Have you any authority for making that statement?—Yes; about 274,000 tons, I think, was exported from Newcastle to New Zealand last year.

133. Suppose it could be proved to be about 124,000?—It would not affect me at all. I read the figures in the New South Wales Mining Statistics.

134. Do you know what quantity of Newcastle coal has been imported into New Zealand annually for, say the last fifteen years?—I do not know.

135. Do you know whether the quantity is increasing or decreasing?—I could not tell you. I do not think it has increased or decreased during the last two or three years.
136. Do you think it has decreased within the last fifteen years?—I do not know.
137. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] As a matter of fact it has decreased. Can you tell us what the output of the Westport Coal Company was last year?—About 500,000 tons.
138. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] What was it ten or twelve years ago?—I could not tell you that.
139. Was it one-half?—I do not think it was one-half.
140. Has there been a gradual increase in the output of the Westport Coal Company since the company's inception?—Yes.
141. What was the increase last year?—I think it was over 100,000 tons.
- Mr. R. McKenzie:* No, 30,000.
- The Chairman:* From 36,000 to 40,000 tons.
142. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] What increase do you anticipate during the current year—from January to December?—About 70,000 tons.
143. You say that Newcastle coal is likely to come into dangerous competition with your company's coal?—That is my idea. With the large output of coal there, they must send it somewhere, and I think they will get a market here.
144. Is that the idea you wish to impress upon members of Parliament in New Zealand?—I do not know what it is for. But I do not want to make any impression upon you to frighten you.
145. You say that is your idea?—My idea is that some of the increased quantity of coal that is being put out in the Newcastle district will find its way to New Zealand.
146. That is the idea that you wish to impress upon the members of the Committee?—They can take it as they like. I do not seek to impress them with it at all. I am telling you what my opinion is.
147. *The Chairman.*] How do you draw your inference from that idea—what ground have you for it?
148. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] And why do you wish us to be impressed with it?—Being connected with the coal trade, and knowing of so many new mines being opened in New South Wales, I know that those mine-owners will try to find a market for their coal, and I think New Zealand will be one of the markets. That is what I think.
149. How long have you been connected with the Westport Coal Company?—Two years and a half.
150. Have you ever known of their having any difficulty in disposing of their coal during that two years and a half?—No, I have known of no difficulty.
151. No difficulty whatever?—No.
152. Do you think the company could dispose of a much larger quantity if they had it?—That I could not tell.
153. You have told us that you anticipate an increase in the output of 70,000 tons this year. Do you think there will be any difficulty in disposing of that?—So far this year there has been no difficulty in disposing of the coal.
154. And seven months of the year have gone?—At the present time there is a lull in the market.
155. How do you account for that?—I cannot tell.
156. Is not the winter season of the year the season in which you dispose of most?—Of course there is more household coal used then.
157. And is not this the winter-time?—Yes. I do not know whether there is any extra quantity of coal used in New Zealand from all mines. I do not know where the coal goes to; I only know that it leaves the mine.
158. As far as your company is concerned, you find some difficulty in finding a market at the present time?—I did not say that. I said there was a lull in the market just at the moment.
159. Do you say that your company at the present time has any difficulty in disposing of its coal?—I cannot answer that question. I cannot say "Yes" or "No."
160. Do you know if there was plant placed in South Africa for 120,000 tons the other day?—I do not know anything about it.
161. As a matter of fact, is it your business to find a market for the coal?—Not at all.
162. With regard to eight hours from bank to bank, do you say that this would make a reduction in your output of 7 per cent.?—Yes; nearly 7 per cent.
163. Under the proposed conditions?—Under the conditions of this new Bill. It will reduce our output 7 per cent.
164. Did you tell us when you gave evidence last year that your mine was working to its full extent?—Yes, last year.
165. Do you now state that you cannot put out any more coal?—We cannot put out any more.
166. Your haulage is working to its full limit?—Yes, this year.
167. You expressed the same opinion last year?—Yes, I suppose I did.
168. But still you are putting out 70,000 more tons?—Yes, but we have had to put more men on to the night shift to do that.
169. But it was your haulage that was limited then?—We were not prepared to put more men on the night shift then.
170. Do you think that if the company finds a market for another 30,000 tons next year that extra quantity could be put out from Millerton and Denniston under existing conditions?—I am certain it could not under existing conditions.
171. Coming to the payment of the doctor: you said that your company pays the doctor £400 per annum?—Yes, equal to £400 between the two places.

172. The company actually gives a free grant to the Medical Association of £100: is not that the position?—Yes, at each place.

173. This can be stopped at any time the company likes; there is no obligation to pay this on the part of the company, is there?—No.

174. Is it also a fact that the Westport Coal Company provides certain comforts for the men, such as billiards?—Yes, at Denniston.

175. The company contributes very liberally towards the men's library, and so on?—Yes.

176. As to the rest of this £400, you say there is a house?—Yes, for the doctor at Granity. There is a house for the doctor at Denniston, but that house really belongs to the men. Let me tell you, though, that it was a bare place, and the company went to the expense of adding two or three more rooms. The men still have the ownership of that place, but the company made alterations and additions to it so as to make it comfortable for the doctor.

177. From the way in which you put it at first I should think that any one hearing your evidence would understand that the company found the whole of the £400 at Denniston?—It is £400 at the two places.

178. You say that there is a groom and a horse provided for the doctor. Of course, that is included in the £400?—Exactly.

179. Does the groom do anything else but attend to the doctor?—Yes, he works in the mine, but he is at the call of the doctor, to put his horse in.

180. Does the horse do anything else, or is it kept specially for the doctor's use?—It does nothing else but take the doctor about at our place. The horse at Denniston may be engaged in other work, but I cannot say. I know that the doctor at Denniston can get any horse he likes if he goes to the stables.

181. There is no special horse for the doctor, is there?—Yes, I think there is at Denniston; and I am quite certain there is at our place.

182. Always?—Yes.

183. You say that we should be penalising the men by compelling them to pay the doctor?—Yes.

184. And also that we should be taking away the liberty of the working-man?—Yes.

185. Do you know whether it is their own wish that we should do that?—I cannot tell you anything about that.

186. Do you know whether they petitioned Parliament in favour of it being done?—I do not know.

187. You do not know whether your own men, or the men working under the manager at Millerton and Denniston, have actually petitioned this House?—In a word, I knew nothing about the Bill until a week ago, when a copy was sent down to me.

188. Would you not know something of what was going on in your own district? Suppose there is a petition signed by a thousand men in that district asking for that to be done, would that surprise you?—No, but I have never heard of it.

189. With reference to the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a ton: did not your company always collect this  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. before? I cannot tell you what was done before I came; but I know that this  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a ton is paid into the bank at Westport by our agent there—

190. And kept from the men?—And placed to the credit of the Accident Fund.

191. Coming to the men's contribution to the Medical Fund: did not your company always collect that?—We keep the doctor's money off from the men's wages, and it is placed to the credit of the Medical Association's Fund at the bank, and whatever subsidy the owners give in money is also placed with that in the same fund; then the company pays to each doctor his month's cheque when it is due.

192. You admit that your company always collected and deducted this amount from the men's wages?—It is an old-standing practice in the coal trade.

193. At least, it has been so in Denniston for a long time?—It has been in the Old Country for years and years.

194. There was a change of doctor at Denniston within the last two years, was there not?—Yes, Dr. Reid left and Dr. B——— came.

195. Is it not a fact that when the men who pay most of the Medical Fund wanted to have a say in the appointment of the doctor the Westport Coal Company objected and wanted to have the appointment solely in their own hands?—I cannot speak for Denniston. I cannot give you an answer on that question with regard to Denniston. I understood that Dr. B——— was engaged there by the company on the recommendation of Dr. Reid, who was there and who was the company's doctor.

196. But you made a statement that you never heard of any dissatisfaction about the doctor on the part of the men employed by the Westport Coal Company?—I never heard a word of discontent about Denniston.

197. And I interjected, "Did that mean within the last twelve months?" and you said it did?—Yes.

198. You must have heard of the dispute when Dr. Reid left, because every one did?—No, I did not.

199. Do you admit that there was a dispute?—No, I do not.

200. Do you know whether the Westport Coal Company refused to collect this money for the Medical Fund from the men after, we will say, the alleged dispute?—I do not know anything about it.

201. Who appointed the present doctor at Denniston, or at both places?—The company.

202. Who require his services mostly?—The working-men and their families.

203. Do you think that when they require the doctor's services mostly they ought to have a say in his appointment?—They have the whole management of it. The appointment rests with the owners, but the owners take no more heed or charge of the management; it is all left to the men. I understand that that arrangement is going on satisfactorily at Denniston.

204. The men and their families pay most of the doctor's medical fees, do they not?—Yes, they are bound to.

205. And require most of his professional services?—Yes.

206. As a matter of fact, do the employees of the company pay into this Medical Fund—say, the permanent staff; I do not mean yourself and others?—Yes; the official staff pay to the Medical Fund.

207. They are not numerous compared with the men?—No.

208. You say that we should be taking away the liberty of the men by compelling them, under this Bill, to pay to the Medical Fund?—I mean that you take the liberty away from the men in compelling them to pay to a certain doctor.

209. Are they not compelled to pay him now?—The owners will not keep a man if he is not giving satisfaction to their men.

210. Do you say that as a definite statement?—I do. If proof was brought forward that a medical man was negligent of his duty, or incapable, they would not keep him.

211. Do you know anything about friendly societies?—No, nothing about them. I was never connected with one.

212. Do you know how the members pay their medical pence?—No. I know nothing about them.

213. Does your company collect this money now?—Yes, it is deducted from the men every fortnight.

214. I mean at Denniston?—Yes.

215. Do you know whether the company refused to collect it some time ago?—No, I never heard of it.

216. You have given evidence as to the effect of coal-mining on health?—Yes.

217. Where did you get the experience to lead you to give the evidence you have given?—From my own observations at the mine which I am connected with.

218. Your observations at the mine at Millerton?—Yes.

219. How long have you been there?—Two years and a half.

220. Was this evidence in connection with the men working underground or on the surface? Did you intend your evidence in connection with the effect of coal-mining on health to be understood to deal with men working on the surface and underground, or the latter only?—I said that our mine was a healthy one to work in.

221. Do you consider coal-mining a healthy occupation?—At our mine it is.

222. Do you know anything about it generally—the general effect on health throughout the colony?—I have not been anywhere other than the mine I am at.

223. So that as to the effect of coal-mining on health generally in New Zealand you do not say?—No, I do not say.

224. You told Mr. Bennet that your coal-hewers made about 19s. a day?—Yes.

225. Is all your coal-hewing done by day work?—By the ton.

226. Is there not a scale of payment laid down by the Court?—Yes; the price was fixed by the award for producing coal by hand labour.

227. What wages do you pay under the award if coal is got by day work?—Twelve shillings a day if a man is put on to shift work. He is paid 12s. a day if he is taken off the coal-cutting to do any shift work. Suppose, for instance, we come to a fault and want a place driven to go through the fault.

228. But the man is not getting coal then?—There may be coal in it. The fault may not take all the coal out. If we put a man in to work there we pay him 12s. a day.

229. That is under the award of the Court?—Yes.

230. Supposing you work altogether by day wages, are there no wages specified in the award that you have to pay the men?—If a coal-hewer is taken off to do shift work he is paid 12s. a day.

231. Do you know, Mr. Fletcher, whether, during the two years and a half that you have been at Millerton, the price of coal-hewing has gone up or down?—Yes. Our hewing-rate was raised 1d. a ton eighteen months ago.

232. Have you ever known of it being reduced?—No, not since I came to the company.

233. Do you know anything about it at Denniston?—There have been no reductions since I came.

234. But at any time?—I do not know what occurred before I came here.

235. Do you think the value of the Westport Coal Company's properties on the West Coast has increased or decreased?—I cannot answer that question.

236. I am asking for your opinion?—I cannot give it.

237. You do not know what the price of the company's shares is in the open market, do you?—That is nothing to go by.

238. I suppose it is not convenient?—I had it read to me yesterday: £7 2s. for sellers, I think it was.

239. Do you never see the shares quoted anywhere?—No; we never get them down our way.

240. Do you know what the value of those shares was, say, seven years ago?—I do not know.

241. You do not know whether there is any depreciation in the value of the properties or not?—The depreciation or the increased value of the property has nothing to do with the selling-prices of the shares.

242. Do you think it has anything to do with the question at issue?—I do not think it has, because the shares can be £7 to-day and in three months' time £4 or £3.



243. So you think that if the property is worth four times as much now as it was ten years ago it has no bearing on the question? Is that your opinion?—That is my opinion.

244. *Mr. Reid.*] You were asked about the management of the mine—whether you were a certificated mine-manager: you are legally responsible to the company for the observance of health conditions, I take it?—Yes.

245. Was that committee that you said recommended that the medical officer should be under the company and not under the miners a committee elected by the miners?—Yes.

246. A committee of the miners themselves recommended that the officer should be under, not the direction of the miners, but the direction of the company itself?—That the appointment should be. That was the recommendation of the Denniston Medical Association's committee to the Millerton Medical Association's committee. The Denniston and Millerton mines are under one company.

247. When was that recommendation made?—About twelve months ago.

248. Is this Medical Association, then, an association selected by the miners from their own number?—Yes, formed by the men themselves, and properly registered.

249. Then, we may take that as being what the men themselves think is the best method of appointing their medical officer?—As far as I know, that is their feeling.

250. Is the health of the men in your neighbourhood good generally?—Exceptionally good in our district.

251. Is there any word of what is known as miners' anæmia among the men?—No.

252. I dare say you have seen mention in the miners' papers recently of some contagious disease: there is no word of it?—No.

253. Do you know if there is any in New Zealand?—No.

254. *Mr. McKenzie* asked you just now as to increasing the output of the mine by 100,000 tons at a future period, and you said that you could not do that. What is it that would limit the output?—The shortening of the hours will limit the output. Understand that when I say that the output cannot be increased, I mean that it cannot be increased without additional expense of £15,000 or £20,000 at each place.

255. And depreciating the value of the property accordingly in the way of dividend?—Yes.

256. *The Chairman.*] With regard to the Medical Association: was Dr. Wills there in your time?—Yes.

257. Do you remember his leaving?—Yes.

258. Do you remember the men calling for applications for a doctor?—Yes.

259. And you remember the men appointing Dr. FitzGerald?—Yes.

260. Did the company then object to Dr. FitzGerald?—They did.

261. Do you remember the company giving notice to the Medical Association that they were to remove from the house which the company had given for the Medical Association?—Yes.

262. And that they would withdraw their subsidy if Dr. FitzGerald was appointed?—If the appointment of the doctor was not made by the company.

263. If the men insisted on appointing Dr. FitzGerald instead of the company?—Yes.

264. Do you remember also that the company gave notice to the men that they would not draw the medical pence?—Yes, I remember that.

265. You said that you had had no dispute formerly with the men about the doctor?—We have had no dispute since Dr. FitzGerald was appointed by the company. That is what I mean.

266. Dr. FitzGerald was first appointed by the men?—I will tell you how he got there. Dr. Wills had a quarrel with the men, and gave three months' notice. A vacancy occurred, and it would suit him if he could get away at the right time. During his notice the miners advertised in the papers for a medical officer. Dr. FitzGerald applied for it, and Dr. Wills, in order to get a *locum tenens* to liberate him, engaged Dr. FitzGerald; and Dr. FitzGerald came just about a fortnight or three weeks before Dr. Wills's notice expired. Dr. FitzGerald came there, and was treated as if he were Dr. Wills during the term he was acting for Dr. Wills. The men wanted to appoint him. The owners did not care to appoint him; they had reasons for not giving way to it. However, the matter was cleared up, and I recommended the company to appoint Dr. FitzGerald and to let the men know he was going to be appointed by the company. There was a meeting of men, which I attended, and the voting was in favour of Dr. FitzGerald being appointed by the company. Since then everything has gone on smoothly.

267. But the men insisted on appointing a doctor themselves at that time—they took a stand? Yes, they wanted to appoint a doctor themselves.

268. The Westport Coal Company wanted the patronage of appointing the doctor by giving this £100 and the house and the horse? The company wanted to have the patronage of appointing the doctor, independent of the men?—Yes, their reason for that was that they were better able to recommend a good man by their intimacy with other respectable men, and they kept upon that score in order to get a respectable man for the workmen and their families. It was for nothing else but to keep a respectable man amongst them.

269. Is it not a fact that up to the time of Dr. FitzGerald every doctor appointed by the company had been a young man with no experience, who had just taken his degree in the University in Dunedin? Were the medical officers who were appointed prior to Dr. FitzGerald men of experience for families and cases of accident in the coal-mine?—I know that Dr. Wills was a Dunedin student, but Dr. FitzGerald studied in the Old Country.

270. But previous to Dr. FitzGerald?—I only knew Dr. Wills. Dr. Reid is a New Zealand man.

271. And a good man too?—Yes; but whilst you may get a young man from the university to take up a practice, I do not think that because of his being newly fledged he is to be despised, because the young men have had opportunities of seeing the latest operations.

272. Do you not think that if you were a working-man you would like to choose your own doctor in preference to having your employer choose him for you?—No, I do not see that.

273. Is it not a fact that the Westport Coal Company insist on appointing the medical officer to attend the men?—Yes, and it is proper, too, because the company will not engage a drunken fellow. They will engage a respectable man, who will conduct himself properly amongst the people.

274. Do you not think it is more to the interests of the men to appoint the doctor than it is to the interests of the company?—Not at all. The company have a better chance of getting good men than the men have. If the men had to appoint a doctor they would never be satisfied with him. He would stay only a few months with them, because they are always kicking up some shine or other.

275. Is not Dr. Fitzgerald a good man?—Yes.

276. Is it not a fact that it was the men who chose him?—Yes.

277. If it had been left to the company at the time Dr. Fitzgerald was chosen by the men, would Dr. Fitzgerald have been chosen?—The company did not appoint Dr. Fitzgerald until they made certain inquiries about him, and were satisfied.

278. I want to know whether, at the time the men called for applications, if the company had had the right to appoint the doctor they would have picked Dr. Fitzgerald?—I could not tell you that.

279. Did not the company, when Dr. Fitzgerald was appointed by the men, give notice to the men that they refused to collect the medical pence, and they would not give the doctor the use of the house nor the use of the dispensary?—Yes, that is right enough. Do you think it reasonable that a proprietor who pays over £400 a year should not have a voice in the appointment of a doctor?

280. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] Your company is liable under the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act, I presume?—Yes.

281. It is to your interest that you should have a properly qualified medical man at your place seeing that you are liable under that Act if you have an inefficient doctor?—Yes.

282. That, and the additional amount that you assist the Medical Fund with, are your reasons for desiring to have a say in the appointment of the medical man?—Those are the two great reasons.

283. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Is it a fact that no man can be employed by the Westport Coal Company now in the mine without he has passed a medical examination?—That is correct. I will explain the matter. There are sixty new hands employed every month at Denniston and Granity together. That shows you how they are coming and going away. What interest can these men have in saying, "Oh, we want a doctor, and we want this and the other"? Sixty who are there this month are not there next month. That shows conclusively that the thing emanates from a very small number of workers.

284. How many men have you employed in the two mines at Millerton and Denniston?—About nine hundred men and boys.

285. You sack sixty of them every month?—I beg your pardon. We do not sack them.

286. Well, change them?—There have not been two men sacked since I went to Millerton. They leave.

287. Are you the mine-manager at Millerton?—I have answered that question.

288. Yes, but I want it to show again before the questions I am going to ask. Have you a mine-manager's certificate to allow you to be a mine-manager in this colony?—I hold an Imperial certificate.

289. But you have no certificate under the Act in New Zealand?—Except what was given to me when I made application.

290. Have you passed any examination in New Zealand?—No.

291. Consequently, you are not a mine-manager under the Act?—No. My certificate does not prevent me from being a mine-manager.

292. I will read some of your own evidence given here last year. You say now that you cannot possibly increase your output without ———?—Without a great deal of expense.

293. And, I think, without driving another haulage tunnel?—Yes.

294. Last year, in reply to Mr. Herries's question, "How many tons do you put out per day at your mine?" you answered, "Between 1,100 and 1,200 tons; but bear in mind that that is in fifteen hours. We have a day shift and a night shift." Then he asked, "Supposing this Bill were carried, and each shift had half an hour less, how much less coal would you put out then?" and you replied, "Nearly 100 tons—80 or 90 tons a day less." Do you still hold to that?—That was correct at the time when I said it.

295. And yet you tell us that you anticipate increasing your output this year by 70,000 tons?—Yes.

296. I have just quoted what you said last year. Then, in answer to this question by Mr. Herries, "Would it be possible to alter your haulage in any way so as to put out the same amount though the men worked half an hour less?" you said, "Not without very large expenditure." His next question was, "What do you call 'large expenditure'?" and you answered, "£12,000 or £15,000." Did you spend that?—No; not all yet.

297. Still, you are putting out more coal. Which evidence do you expect us to take, last year's or this year's, if it is a fair question?—You can please yourself about that.

298. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Did you make some alterations to increase your output this year?—Yes, we put a larger number of men on after we got the mine opened up.

299. Did you make any alterations underground in the haulage or in any other way?—No, not in the haulage, but we opened out.

300. It was simply a question of men?—Yes, at that time.

301. That was what you were referring to, was it?—This tunnel that Mr. McKenzie speaks about is being driven now.

302. For what purpose?—To get into another part of the coalfield, in order to supplement our first incline with coal.

303. To increase your output?—Yes.

304. *The Chairman.*] Is your company making improvements at Coalbrookdale now?—Yes and expending a lot of money.

305. Will they, through these improvements, be able to send out a lot more coal this year?—I could not tell you. I cannot answer that.

306. You said that there was another doctor at Granity Creek for a time?—Yes.

307. He could not make a living there?—I suppose not.

308. Does not that prove that the doctor appointed by the men was well qualified to do his work, and that it was a wise appointment? Do you know the reason why he did not make a living?—I do not wish to state anything about it.

309. What wages do the men working the machines at the face get?—Eleven shillings a shift.

310. That is considered very hard work?—No; it is not.

311. I understand that the men working at the machines cannot stand it long, and that is the reason why fifty to sixty men leave each month?—No; the machine-men are pretty permanent men. The truckers and fillers are the moving class.

312. Are you aware that over six hundred men on the West Coast of New Zealand—miners at Denniston, Granity Creek, and Mokihinui—have sent a petition to the House in support of this Bill for shorter hours?—I am not aware of it, but I am not surprised.

313. Are you aware that over five hundred men in the mines in the North Island and Otago have sent a petition to the House for shorter hours?—I am not aware of it.

314. *Mr. Reid.*] Your company is liable for accidents in the mine under the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act?—Yes.

315. So you have a vital interest in securing a good medical officer?—Yes.

316. If he was an inefficient man you might have to compensate the men to a much larger extent than if they were under the charge of a good medical man?—Certainly.

317. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] If your company were insured against accidents in the mine it would cost them only a fixed sum annually, but by taking the risk themselves it is an unknown amount that they may be liable for?—Yes.

318. *Mr. Bennet.*] Have you had any improved hewing-appliances put into your mine since the last time you gave evidence here?—No; we have the same appliances now as we had then.

319. Do any of the men working in the mines insure their lives—that is, outside of the accident insurance?—I suppose so, but I could not tell you.

320. Would they have to pay more than men in other occupations?—I do not think they do now.

H. J. H. ELIOTT examined. (No. 3.)

321. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—H. J. H. Elliott.

322. You are Under-Secretary for Mines?—Yes.

323. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Perhaps, as Mr. Elliott is here, he will tell us about this clause of Mr. McNab's on the Supplementary Order Paper?—As I understand the clause, it means that there are certain Crown lands held under lease subject to the Mining Act. A man applies to take up a mining privilege—under lease in perpetuity or perpetual lease—and the holder of the lease gets notice that his land is about to be resumed. He goes to the Compensation Court and gets an award by the Warden and Assessors. Then the mining speculator, who has given all this trouble to the Crown tenant, does not go any further. The tenant may lose a season's crops. This provision, I understand, is to make the mining speculator pay to the Crown tenant the compensation awarded him.

## APPENDIX.

THURSDAY, 6TH AUGUST, 1903.

THE following telegrams were read by the Clerk:—

Mr. Moss, Member of Parliament, Wellington. 1st August, 1903.  
MINERS' Union respectfully urge on you to support McKenzie's Mining Amendment Act, *re* hours of labour in mines. J. SLEVIN, Secretary, Waihi.

Mr. Herries, Member of Parliament, Wellington. 1st August, 1903.  
MINERS' Union respectfully urge on you to support McKenzie's Mining Amendment Act *re* hours of labour in mines. J. SLEVIN, Secretary, Waihi.

Chairman, Coal-mines Committee, Wellington. 3rd August, 1903.  
We strongly object to amendment in Coal-mines Bill referring to hours bank to bank. Cannot now compete against Newcastle coals with profit. Any further cost will mean closing down.  
NORTHERN COMPANY.

Chairman, Coal-mines Committee, Wellington.  
**STRONGLY** protest against the eight-hours-bank-to-bank proposal. Our men are earning good wages under existing conditions and are quite contented.

5th August, 1903.

KIRIPAKA COAL COMPANY.

4th August, 1903.

Chairman, Coal-mines Committee, Government Buildings, Wellington.  
**PROPOSED** amendment Coal-mines Act *re* eight hours from bank to bank would so seriously affect Ngunguru Company's mine that we would certainly have to close down. Prices cannot be advanced, as market is glutted with coke and Newcastle coal. Our coastal coal-vessels are idle in consequence; so my directors trust, in the interests of both masters and men, such an extra handicap will not be enacted.

E. FORD, Secretary.

5th August, 1903.

J. Colvin, M.H.R., Chairman, Mines Committee, Wellington.  
**LOCAL** coal-owners strongly protest against clauses 2 and 3 Mr. McKenzie's Bill, restriction of hours clause 2 Mr. Colvin's. The proposals mean reducing output 7 per cent. Dead loss to companies, cost of production and maintenance remaining same. Arbitration Court should decide length and distribution of working-time and definition of "miner." Court specially created settle industrial disputes. If any grievance miners should bring it before Court. *Re* ventilation: should be left as at present. Proposed amendment unworkable. Signed on behalf of Otago and Southland collieries,

JAS. M. E. GARROW,

Secretary, Otago Employers' Association.

The Chairman of the Goldfields and Mines Committee, Wellington.  
**THE** Miners' Union respectfully urge on you to support McKenzie's Amendment Bill *re* hours of labour in mines.

J. SLAVIN, Secretary, Waihi.

James Colvin, Esq., M.H.R., Chairman of the Goldfields and Mines Committee, Wellington.  
**WE** earnestly hope you will support Mr. McKenzie's Bill *re* hours of labour in mines.

HOLLOWS,

Secretary, Miners' Union, Kaitangata.

James Colvin, Esq., M.H.R., Chairman, Goldfields and Mines Committee.  
**I AM** instructed by the Trades and Labour Council, Westland, to urge upon your Committee the urgent necessity of recommending the amendment of the Mining Acts *re* the hours of labour in mines, as provided in the Bill introduced by Mr. McKenzie, M.H.R. There are seven miners' unions affiliated to our Council, with a membership of upwards of two thousand.

HENRY BETTS, Secretary.

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