

that we would go to work until Parliament met and then ask for a measure providing that the Court should have nothing to do with it, so that eight hours a day should be the law all over the country.

100. With reference to the gas-tester, is the gas-tester always reliable?—It should be.

101. But is it?—If the gas is always there it must be reliable.

102. And you want this to be put in charge of a practical man?—In all those mines where there is gas there is always a practical man kept who understands the lamps. The present test, as I say, is a blow, and if you cannot blow the light out it is considered to be all right.

103. You are satisfied that this proposed tester is an improvement?—Yes.

104. *Mr. Smith.*] The sole reason for your desire to increase the age at which boys can work in mines from thirteen to fourteen is because there is provision to that effect in the Gold-mines Act?—Yes; and because fourteen is young enough for any boy to go underground.

105. Insisting upon fans being used in mines would add to the expense, would it not?—I do not think an Inspector would insist on fans being put in where they were not required.

106. What gas would you use for testing the safety-lamps?—They could use any kind of gas. I do not think there would be five shillings' worth of material used in the whole thing. There is very little expense involved in any of our suggestions.

107. *Hon. C. H. Mills.*] Do you think a lad's health would suffer more seriously in a coal-mine than in a quartz-mine?—I should imagine a gold-mine was the worse.

108. *Mr. W. Fraser.*] With regard to the sick and accident fund, that was instituted before the Workers' Compensation Act, was it not?—That is so.

109. In the event of an accident happening to a man he receives a certain amount during the time he is incapacitated, and in the event of death his relatives receive a certain amount, while under the sick and accident fund he is precluded from receiving anything for sickness which is not the result of an accident. Supposing the Act was altered to provide that instead of a man getting anything in a case of accident at all it would apply partly to sickness. Under the other Act he gets payment for the accident, but gets nothing for sickness, whereas this Act could be made to apply to sickness alone. Would that not be a better plan for the mining community, as the charges would not then be so much as to make the thing inoperative, because at present the fund could not bear it. Have you looked at the matter from that aspect?—I am inclined to think that would be a better way, but I do not know whether the fund would meet it. All that we ask is that in a case of sickness, if a man dies, his relatives shall receive relief.

110. Keep it to that if you like, so as to be sure that the fund will bear it?—We have something like £100 every quarter over and above what it costs for accidents. We shall be accumulating between £300 and £400 every year over and above what we require. That is at $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton. We must have something like a few thousand pounds lying in the fund, and it will accumulate also in the two Government mines, and the two Westport Company's mines over and above what is required, and we conclude that we could make it apply to natural death as well as to accidents.

111. Surely if it would carry death from sickness now together with death from accident it would more easily carry death from sickness alone?—I still adhere to the same thing, that we think it would be going far enough in what we are asking for.

112. I am merely trying to assure that the fund will bear what you are asking for?—The fund will bear what we are asking for.

113. *The Chairman.*] With regard to these check inspectors, you ask that they be paid by the Mines Department—that is, by the colony?—Yes.

114. Would you still expect them to be under the unions?—Yes; they would be acting for them.

115. They would be under the control of the Miners' Union in the district they were acting in?—Yes.

116. As Mr. McKenzie has said, if a sub-inspector were put on in every mine you would expect that sub-inspector to be under the Miners' Union and not under the Mines Department?—That is so.

117. With regard to the accident fund provided by the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton. What I understand is that the miners of Denniston, Millerton, and other places consider that they would like to have that fund transferred to a sick fund, so that if miners get sick through working in bad air or in consequence of bad explosives being used they should be entitled, if out of work for two or three months, to sick-pay, because under the Workers' Compensation for Accidents fund they are not entitled. I understand you want that fund for a sick and funeral fund?—I have no authority to urge anything beyond what I have put before you.

118. It has been stated that some £800 has been received and £700 has been paid away out of the fund. I understand the Westport Coal Company alone have put out some 500,000 tons of coal in the Denniston and Granity mines, so that there is something apparently wrong?—Yes; that is ridiculous. The fund is quite sufficient to stand what we are asking.

DENIS O'BRIEN examined. (No. 2.)

119. *The Chairman.*] What is your address?—Millerton.

120. What are you?—I am a delegate from the Miners' Union and from the Trades and Labour Council.

121. You have seen the Coal-mines Act Amendment Bill which is now before the Committee?—Yes.

122. And you wish to give evidence upon it?—Yes.

123. Will you refer to special points on the subject which you think have not already been dealt with?—With regard to suggestion No. 3, dealing with the payment of wages within two miles of the mine-mouth. I wish to say there are about two hundred men who have to walk about three miles to get