

113. You blame the Inspectors for the inefficiency and not the Department?—Certainly, if the inefficiency is due to the Inspectors themselves.

114. Do you think that if better Inspectors were appointed you would have fewer complaints?—Certainly; there is no question about that.

115. *Mr. Smith.*] You promised to tell us why the Arbitration Court did not remake their award?—I can tell you what I think to be the reason. I stated that in my opinion it was to prevent the hours of labour coming into force as provided by the Mining Act Amendment Act.

116. You stated that you wanted an alteration of the law in order to get eight hours from bank to bank exclusive of meal-times instead of inclusive of meal-times?—No; I did not say anything of the kind.

117. I understood you to say that?—No. Certainly inclusive of meal-times.

118. Will you tell the Committee actually what hours each miner would work a day?—It depends upon the mine of course. Some of them would work seven and a half hours a day at the face. It depends upon what you call "work." If you tell me what you term "work," I could give you my answer.

119. What I term "work" is according to the position of the man down the mine—whether he is a trucker or miner?—In a great many of the mines, where men have to travel long distances, they sometimes have to carry tools and sometimes have to bring up trucks and timber with them. They are actually working in the mine until they leave it, except for the small amount of time they have for crib. Of course, the actual work at the face would be seven and a half hours, but we claim time from the time the man enters the mine until he leaves it.

120. It has been suggested that the reason why the Arbitration Court would not give an award was because they would have to bring down the wages?—I do not think that has been suggested. The Court did not say so.

121. Would the shortening of the hours bring down the wages?—No.

122. Then it would increase the cost of getting the coal?—I do not think so.

123. Could a man do all the work required in the time?—You must understand this, that a miner is not in the same position as a man working on the surface. A miner is working under the worst possible conditions and can only work a certain number of hours with efficiency. I think the same rule should obtain in this colony in relation to miners as obtained in the County of Durham in the Old Country, which is six hours from bank to bank, taking the conditions which the men work under and taking surface-work into consideration.

124. This is what is reported in the *Journal* of the Labour Department in connection with the Arbitration Court: "That so great a change would largely increase the cost of production unless an all-round reduction of rates of wages were made, a reduction which we could not make without reversing the previous action of the Court"?—Of course, that is the opinion of the Court, but we contend that that opinion is an erroneous one.

125. *Mr. Herries.*] They took evidence?—No; they took no evidence, so far as I can recollect on that point, as to whether it would increase the cost of production or not. That is my statement from practical experience, that a man cannot work efficiently more than six hours underground at the face.

126. *The Chairman.*] You said you thought two Inspectors were quite enough for the West Coast?—I think so still.

127. And yet you complained that it was over three months sometimes before some of the mines at Reefton were inspected?—Yes.

128. How can you reconcile that?—I cannot reconcile it. It is for the Inspector of Mines to answer that question. I cannot tell what they have been doing.

129. If a mine goes without inspection for three months do you not think that period is too long?—Certainly it is. There are some small coal-mines up the Buller River supplying dredges and some small quartz-mines that do not want to be inspected quite so often because there is not the extent of workings necessitating it.

130. I think, personally, there is more danger in these small mines, unless they are under proper management. Some of them have no manager at all except the miner, and there is no inspection of the mine. There may be two men working there, and I think it is more necessary to inspect such a mine for the health of those men, which is equally valuable to their families as the health of the men in large mines?—I am not saying that the lives of these men are not valuable, because they are equally valuable; but still, from my practical knowledge of mining, I say again that a small mine does not require inspection so often as a large mine.

131. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Why?—Simply because the workings are not so extensive.

132. You say that the mines are not sufficiently inspected now?—Yes.

133. Is that owing to the inability of the Inspectors or through their not inspecting them often enough?—I should say the inability, and not the inspection. I am not here to condemn the Inspectors of Mines, but you asked a question and I have given a straight answer. If you asked my honest opinion about it I say they are not too capable.

134. Are there any contract works going on now in Reefton, in the Progress Mines, of road-work underground?—Yes.

135. What is it?—A tunnel is being driven there in No. 11 chamber to intersect the reef. They have let a contract for it.

136. Have the Consolidated Mines any contracts?—Yes; there are two contracts at the present time going on in the Consolidated Mines. There is a shaft being sunk in the Energetic Mine which is one of the Consolidated Mines, and there is a crosscut going on in the Golden Fleece to intersect the reef. Those are the only two contracts I know of in the Consolidated Mines.