

1905.
NEW ZEALAND.

GOLDFIELDS AND MINES COMMITTEE:

INTERIM REPORT ON THE COAL-MINES ACTS AMENDMENT BILL, TOGETHER WITH MINUTES
OF EVIDENCE.

(MR. COLVIN, CHAIRMAN.)

Interim Report brought up 30th August, 1905, and ordered to be printed.

ORDERS OF REFERENCE.

Extracts from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

TUESDAY, THE 4TH DAY OF JULY, 1905.

Ordered, "That Standing Order No. 218 be suspended, and that a Committee be appointed, consisting of sixteen members, 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. Mr. Mills, Mr. Moss, Mr. Reid, Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon, Mr. Smith, Mr. Witheford, and the mover."—(Hon. Mr. McGowan).

FRIDAY, THE 28TH DAY OF JULY, 1905.

Ordered, "That the Coal-mines Acts Amendment Bill be referred to the Goldfields and Mines Committee."

INTERIM REPORT.

THE Goldfields and Mines Committee, to whom was referred the Coal-mines Acts Amendment Bill, have the honour to report that they have taken a considerable body of evidence in connection with the matters embodied—or it is held should be embodied—in the said Bill, and they now submit as an interim report that they recommend your honourable House to order that the said evidence be laid on the table and be printed.

Parliament Buildings, Wellington, 30th August, 1905.

JAMES COLVIN,
Chairman.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

THURSDAY, 17TH AUGUST, 1905.

The Chairman : I have some suggestions before me which have been presented by the Miners' Union through Mr. Betts, their secretary, and I understand that certain gentlemen are here to give evidence upon them. The following are the suggestions :—

Suggestions by Miners' Representatives in Connection with the Coal-mines Act Amendment Bill.

1. That after the word "Inspector" in the third line of clause 3 the words "and workmen's Inspectors" be inserted.

2. The workmen's inspectors to be permitted to visit the scene of an accident immediately an accident occurs.

3. That in section 7, reference to payment of wages within a limit of two miles be struck out, and that where the Workers' Union, or a majority of workmen employed at the mine, so desires, payment of wages shall be made at the mine mouth.

4. That provision be made for the supply of the best explosives at cost price from the mine-owner, and that no explosive be permitted to be used in any mine unless the Inspector of Explosives has certified that it is the best from a health point of view that can be procured in the market.

5. That payment under the Coal-Miners' Accident Relief Fund be made for deaths through sickness as well as through accident, and that the fund be consolidated and converted into a Colonial Fund for the benefit of all coal-miners.

6. That provision be made for a Superannuation Fund for the benefit of all coal-miners.

7. That Miners' Unions be empowered to take extracts from time-books and wages-sheets and books.

8. That in all mines where safety-lamps are used it be made compulsory for mine-owners to provide a proper gas-tester to enable the miner to test his lamp before entering the mine.

9. That fans be at all times used where artificial ventilation is, in the opinion of the Inspector of Mines or the workmen's inspectors, required.

10. That before any person can take the position of shift-boss, fireman, or deputy in a mine, he shall have had at least five years' practical experience as a miner, and shall pass an examination by the Inspector of Mines on gases before he is allowed to carry a closed lamp to detect gas, and shall have a thorough knowledge of ventilation and timbering.

11. That all Sunday work in or about a coal-mine be paid for at the rate of double ordinary time, and that overtime be paid for at the rate of time and a quarter.

12. That 2½ per cent. be allowed from the Coal-Miners' Accident Relief Fund for the purpose of management.

13. That the check-inspectors be paid by the Mines Department whilst employed inspecting the mine.

14. That power be given to check-inspectors to have any practice or thing discontinued or done which they consider to be dangerous or injurious to the health of the workmen employed in or about a mine.

15. That the hours of labour in mines be not more than eight hours from surface to surface in any one shift.

16. That in any section of a mine where inflammable gas exists no naked lights shall be used, and, where the various sections of a mine where inflammable gas is found are connected one with the other by workings of any description, safety lamps shall be used throughout the mine.

JOHN FOSTER examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman*.] You are president of the Miners' Union at Denniston?—Yes.

2. You have read the Bill which is now before this Committee—the Coal-mines Act Amendment Bill—and are here now to give evidence upon it?—Yes. As far as the Bill is concerned we quite agree with it, with the exception of clauses 6 and 7. We want provision made that the men's inspectors shall have the same notice of an accident given to them as the Inspectors of Mines or the Minister of Mines—that is, with reference to clause 6—and, except for that, we think the Bill is a very good one. With regard to clause 7, which provides for the payment of wages either at the mine or at some place not more than two miles from the mine, we think that is out of all reason, and that the two miles should be struck out, with a view of providing that the wages shall be paid at the mine-mouth or at some reasonable distance from it, because two miles is a very long way for men to have to walk to get paid. I might say that we would be quite willing to compromise on this point, say by a provision that it shall not be more than half a mile from the mine-mouth. We have nothing more to complain about in other parts of the Bill, and consider it is very fair and that it would be beneficial to all concerned.

3. With respect to the suggestions you have sent in. Have you anything to say with regard to No. 4?—We think that suggestion No. 4 should be carried out in any mine, and that the employer should supply the very best explosives possible.

4. *Mr. R. McKenzie*.] Who is going to be the judge of the quality of the explosive?—I expect the Government Inspector would be the judge.

5. *The Chairman.*] The clause states that the Inspector of Explosives shall be satisfied that it is the best, from a health point of view, that can be procured in the market?—Yes, quite so.

6. Now with regard to No. 5: "That payment under the Coal-miners' Accident Relief Fund be made for deaths through sickness as well as through accident, and that the fund be consolidated and converted into a colonial fund for the benefit of all coal-miners"?—Yes; we have asked for this for many years, and we think it should apply to those dying a natural death as well as to those dying from accident. Supposing a man falls sick and lies in his own house: he has a wife and family who have to battle for existence. If he dies he gets nothing out of the fund that he has helped to accumulate, probably for many years. All we ask is that in case of death through sickness those concerned shall come under the same rule as if death were caused by accident. Where a woman has a husband who is sick for four or five weeks she is put to more cost than she would be if the man were killed. In connection with this proposal I have been asked to say that a man should be in a mine a certain time before he comes under the rule, but under the Coal-mines Act at the present time if he has only worked for a day or for five minutes and meets with an accident his wife is entitled to certain assistance. I do not think we should put any restrictions on men working in the mines. We think the benefits should apply in a case of natural death as well as in a case of accident. With regard to the fund being consolidated and converted into a colonial fund for the benefit of all coal-miners, we think that that would be beneficial, and that it should be done. You will get further evidence on that by-and-by showing that where the accident fund had been in vogue for years there was a good bit of money in the fund, and yet at Tyneside this could not be touched although the miners had contributed to the fund for years. If it were made a colonial fund any miner would be able to get the benefit of it, and I, therefore, think it is a fair and reasonable demand.

7. Clause 6: "That provision be made for a superannuation fund for the benefit of all coal-miners"?—I do not know much about this matter, and I think you will get better evidence later from another member of our party.

8. Clause No. 7: "That Miners' unions be empowered to take extracts from time-books and wages sheets and books"?—I think that is a very needful clause to be put into the Bill. Under the Labour Department Bill you give the Inspector power to inspect a company's books as regards wages or anything else, and if we had this power it would be the means of saving a lot of trouble and time at the Conciliation Board and in the Arbitration Court. I might say, by way of illustration, that during the last arbitration case we had at Westport, I went to the Westport Coal Company's manager and asked him to supply me with the exact amounts of money which his men had earned, so that I should be able to draw up a proper requisition to place before the Court, but I was refused this information. The reference to the Court was in consequence drawn up blindfolded, and if we had had this power to inspect the books we should not have had to place before the Court such a reference as we did. What we require is the privilege to inspect the wages-books for, say, a period of three months, so that we can base our claims upon them before the Court. As it is we cannot do it. Some men will perhaps be earning as much as 12s. and 14s. a day, and will mislead us by saying that they are only getting 10s. We had some thirty-two clauses in our reference to the Arbitration Court, and if I had been in possession of the information now referred to there would have been only about three. We think the wages-book should not be made a secret and kept away from anybody. I was down at Seddonville, where the men told me that Mr. Bishop, the manager there, did not do things in that way, and I was very pleased to learn it, because it allows the parties to consult one another and facilitates things a great deal in Arbitration Court work.

9. Now with regard to clause 8: "That in all mines where safety-lamps are used it be made compulsory for mine-owners to provide a proper gas-tester to enable the miner to test his lamp before entering the mine"?—I think that is a very necessary thing. Where there is gas in a mine the system all through the West Coast has been what is called the blowing process—that is, a man takes a lamp and blows it, and if he cannot blow the light out the lamp is considered to be all right. A proper gas-tester would not cost very much, and the miner would know without doubt whether his lamp was right or wrong. Where these lamps are generally used there is what is called a lamp-man kept, and the only expense would be to supply a little gas-tester, in order that the miner could prove for himself, as well as the man who had given it to him, whether his lamp was safe or not.

10. Clause 9: "That fans be at all times used where artificial ventilation is, in the opinion of the Inspector of Mines, or the workmen's inspectors, required"?—We think that that should be made compulsory. In my opinion if fans were used in such mines we should not have so many fires as we do, and for the sake of the health of the miners they should be used instead of relying on natural ventilation. I have seen mines where there has been natural ventilation in some places and where the smoke has been coming out of the mine, and five minutes afterwards it would be going back again. You cannot depend upon natural ventilation. We do not believe in furnace ventilation at all, but purely and simply in the fan. The Blackball Mine has been a source of great trouble in connection with the air for years, but we find now that since a fan has been placed there there is not a better-ventilated mine in the colony, or a more comfortable mine for men to work in. That offers very good evidence in favour of a fan as against natural ventilation.

11. Now take clause 10: "That, before any person can take the position of shift-boss, fireman, or deputy in a mine, he shall have had at least five years' practical experience as a miner, and shall pass an examination by the Inspector of Mines on gases before he is allowed to carry a closed lamp to detect gas, and shall have a thorough knowledge of ventilation and timbering"?—I think that is a very necessary provision. We have had instances where men have walked into a mine without having seen the inside of a mine before, and where they have been allowed to carry these lamps, which was a dangerous proceeding to all concerned. Such men can know practically nothing about air, and we think they should go through this examination so that they should know. There have been times in my life when I have

gone in to inspect a mine—reading the reports before I went in, and finding things all right—and then twenty minutes afterwards I have found them to be all wrong, through the men not knowing anything about such matters.

12. Now with regard to clause 11: “That all Sunday work in or about a coal-mine be paid for at the rate of double ordinary time, and that overtime be paid for at the rate of time and a quarter”?—The miners look at it in this light, that double time is paid all over the world for Sunday work, and we think it is only right that we should have double time for working in a mine on Sunday. As far as Sunday work is concerned we do not want to do it, but we recognise that it can scarcely be done without in a coal-mine.

13. What do you get now?—Time and a quarter.

14. Clause 12: “That 2½ per cent. be allowed from the Coal-miners’ Accident Relief Fund for the purpose of management”?—That is practically asking the Government to assist the different secretaries throughout the colony to distribute the half-penny royalty fund on the expenditure. What that means is this: it is not 2½ per cent. on the whole of the money, but 2½ per cent. on the money collected for the year. Say we have £5,000 lying down there now: we do not want 2½ per cent. on that, but we want 2½ per cent. per annum on the amount coming through our hands.

15. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] What would the amount be?—About £150, I think.

16. *Hon. Mr. Guinness.*] The total amount comes to £480. It is £893 for the whole of the mines of the colony?—We pay £30 a year to our secretary, and we ask that 2½ per cent. on all the money raised shall be set aside each year in each mine.

17. *The Chairman.*] Clause 13: “That the check inspectors be paid by the Mines Department whilst employed inspecting the mine”?—This is a matter which we have had before the Government for some years, and we still think it is necessary. We quite recognise this, that, so far as the Inspector on the West Coast is concerned, he is not in a position to get reliable information as to the way in which a mine has been worked at all times, because if an Inspector does not visit a mine oftener than once in three or four months there can be quite a mass of coal lost without his knowing it unless the men’s inspectors report it to him. This is a case of looking after the assets of the colony as well as looking after ourselves, and I think the Inspector should be brought more closely into touch with the workmen’s inspectors in connection with this matter. It is the only means by which he can get information as to whether there is any loss in a mine or not. We think that if the men were paid by the Government they could do their work fearlessly, and if there were any loss in that respect they could simply book it irrespective of anybody. Our inspection of the mine is generally about once a month, while the inspection by the Inspector of Mines, I suppose, will be about once every three or four months, and it is impossible on the West Coast, I think, for him to do it any oftener in a district so large. We think these things would facilitate matters a great deal and would make the mine-owners very careful when they knew that men were on the job all the time.

18. Clause 14: “That power be given to check inspectors to have any practice or thing discontinued or done which they consider to be dangerous or injurious to the health of the workmen employed in or about a mine”?—At present if anything is done in the mine we can say nothing to any one about it—all that we can do is to report it. The Act gives us no power to say whether it shall or shall not be done, and we ask for power to say whether anything that is unsatisfactory shall be continued or discontinued if it is considered to be dangerous or injurious to the health of the workmen.

19. Clause 15: “That the hours of labour in mines be not more than eight hours from surface to surface in any one shift”?—The reason we are asking for that is this: some four years ago we made an agreement for two years, and at the end of that agreement we filed a reference. The reference was lying some nine months before the case was heard, and then the Court refused to give a further award, and in consequence we have had to work under the old award. Instead of working eight hours from bank to bank we have had to work eight and a half. At the present time any mine that is not working under an agreement is working eight hours from bank to bank. The State collieries are working eight hours, and several other mines are working eight hours where the award has been altered since the passing of the Act, but where they are working under the existing award they have to work eight and a half, and that is the position with Granity, Denniston, Blackball, and Reefton. At Brunner, I believe, they are working eight hours from bank to bank, and yet the biggest company in the colony is exempt from that provision. We believe the Court has gone beyond its jurisdiction in not making an award when requested. We think that by the Court being called upon to consider the reference, if they did not alter the award one iota, but extended it for a further term, we should have come under the Eight-hours Act; but they did not make any alteration in the award, and we have still to work under the old one. That is the reason why we are asking for this provision. We think it should come into operation immediately the law is made.

20. Clause 16: “That in any section of a mine where inflammable gas exists no naked lights shall be used, and where the various sections of a mine where inflammable gas is found are connected one with the other by workings of any description safety-lamps shall be used throughout the mine”?—We think that is a very necessary clause. It appears to me, after looking through statistics as to explosions here and there, that it is time this matter was taken in hand, and we did away with some of the present dangerous practices. It is necessary in my opinion to make it compulsory, where gas is known to exist in a mine, to use safety-lamps. I have been in a mine myself—in the Brunner in fact, many years before the explosion took place—where I had to work with a safety-lamp, and yet within a few yards of me there was a man working with an open light. We think that safety-lamps should be used in the different sections of a mine where inflammable gas is found in any of them. I would like to amend the clause a little as there has been an oversight. We have had a measure before the Government dealing with the sealing-off of old workings, and we have found by evidence that it is in consequence of these old workings giving off gas that a lot of these explosions have occurred, and we have come

to the conclusion that it would be better to seal none of these old workings off at all unless in consequence of fire. What we ask is that there should be brick or log stoppings put in where the workings are sealed off, with proper gauges put in, so that there should be a proper amount of air in the workings and round the faces. The Coal-mines Act gives no power for any more than 100 cubic feet of air for every man, boy, and horse in the mine. Supposing you have 30 acres of ground worked and you have to seal that off. You have to produce 100 cubic feet of air for these people, and simply turn the place into a gasometer. So we say that as the work proceeds and matters advance there should be more are provided so as to clear these workings of dangerous gases. When we consider the Mount Kemble disaster we find that it was caused through a fall in the old workings, and we think that instead of the air being so-much per head for every man, horse, and boy, it should apply to acreages as well as in the case of old workings. We consider this is a very necessary thing, and hope you will take it into your consideration. As regards putting more air in a mine, I may say that it is a question that requires more engineering skill than can be expected from a common workman, who desires to put the matter before Parliament as it should be put. We think that if old workings are sealed off they should be cleared of inflammable gases, which should not be allowed to be stored up. There is another little matter that I would like to mention. We find that it is provided in the Gold-mines Act that no lad can go into a mine to work under the age of fourteen, and I would like a similar provision inserted in the Coal-mines Act. I have various reasons for urging that. Within the last two years in our district the old system of passing standards in our public schools has been done away with, and it is possible now for a boy to pass two standards in the one year, if he is capable of doing so, with the result that many lads can get out of school now at twelve years of age. Their people cannot afford to keep them at home, and, naturally want them to go to work, and therefore I think the Act should be altered to prevent these young people going to work in a mine under the age of fourteen.

21. *Mr. J. Allen.*] How can they pass two standards in the one year?—It is a matter of giving the bright boy an opportunity to go ahead. That is what the Education Board is doing.

22. *Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] Do you know of any case where a boy under thirteen years of age has been put into a mine?—No; but we are frightened they will come in.

Mr. J. Allen: It cannot be done under the Act.

23. *Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] Although a lad might pass the Sixth Standard at twelve years he cannot go into a coal-mine until after he is thirteen?—That is so, but we want it made up to fourteen years of age. We think that is young enough for any lad to go into a mine, or to be employed about a mine.

24. *Mr. J. Allen.*] With regard to the question of explosives, what suggestion have you to make to get over the difficulty of determining what is the best explosive?—Some one would certainly have to inspect the explosives. It is mentioned here that the Government would have to do so.

25. Every time an explosive was used or sent to the mine it would have to be certified to? It would be a very difficult matter?—It would be a matter for consideration how to get at it.

26. With regard to the accident fund being made available for death and sickness: I suppose you know the principle on which the Workers' Compensation for Accidents legislation has been put upon the statute-book—that is, the general principle is that the industry should bear the cost of the accident?—Yes.

27. Could you apply that principle to sickness that did not occur through the industry at all?—What we are asking for is this: that if a coal-miner lies in his home sick, say for three months, and then dies, the same remuneration that is provided of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a ton shall be paid as if he were killed in the mine, so long as he belonged to the mine. Under the accident fund if a man goes to work for a day and is killed he is brought under the fund just the same as if he had been working in the mine for fifty years.

28. That is in the course of his employment, but what I want to know is why the industry should bear it for sickness that is not caused through his employment?—We say that the man may have been working there for years and helped to accumulate the fund. Is it not very hard that his family should in such a case not get the relief?

29. Is there sufficient money in the fund to bear this?—There is down our way.

30. But you want to consolidate it?—Yes.

31. Well, would it bear it?—Yes, I think there is ample.

32. Do you know what amount is received and spent in the fund now?—No; I could not tell you the general thing right through.

33. Are you aware that the receipts last year were £893 and the expenditure £725 for the whole of the colony?—Those figures surprise me.

34. You think that even if the sickness occurs, not through his employemnt in the industry, and death ensues, the industry should bear it?—I do.

35. With regard to the question of superannuation, what general principle have you to suggest?—I have said that I would not say much about that; I would not commit myself on that.

36. With regard to the pay-sheets, does not every miner get a pay-ticket setting out every item?—He does.

37. What is your difficulty about getting them?—We cannot get them from the men. Sometimes they say they have lost them and we cannot get them.

38. Is that a difficulty that cannot be overcome?—I may tell you that it cost our union something like £25 last year for collecting these tickets, and then we were something like one-third short.

39. Do you not think that if an employer gives an employee a full statement of his wages, that is all you can reasonably ask of him?—Well, the Labour Department Bill gives the Inspector power under certain conditions to inspect books, and all we ask is that we shall be able to get references from these books, because it would facilitate matters considerably for us. As I said before, at the last sitting

of the Arbitration Court on the West Coast we had some thirty-three items down on our order-paper, and if we had got a full statement of affairs we should have only had three items, so you can see the vast difference it would make to us. I went to the Westport Coal Company and asked them to supply me with a full statement of what their men earned, and they refused to do so; consequently, we were all in the dark. That is my reason for asking this, that we may facilitate business so that we can go before the Court and know what we are doing.

40. Are you aware that an ordinary pay-sheet contains more information than simply the payment of wages?—I do not think it should. It is public property when a man gets his pay.

41. Yes, that is so, but I cannot understand why you cannot get the particulars of the pay-sheets from the men. Everything is given in full?—Yes, but we cannot get them.

42. *Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] Would it cost the companies much if it were provided by law that they were to give a duplicate of the colliers' pay-sheets to you?—I do not think so.

43. Would that get over the difficulty?—Anything would do so long as we could get the true statement. What we are asking for is this, that the secretary of the union should be allowed to go and copy these things off the book.

44. There might be some objection about your overhauling the company's books, but there could be no objection to your getting a duplicate?—That would suit. I think it is an important matter, because we could then get what we want before the Court correct.

45. *Mr. J. Allen.*] What do you say about fans: "That fans be at all times used where artificial ventilation is, in the opinion of the Inspector of Mines or the workmen's inspectors, required." Why put in "workmen's inspectors"? Is not the Inspector of Mines sufficient?—I do not know. I find sometimes that the workman has to do more than the Inspector in this way, that we have no power at all under the present law. The present law says that we shall only report.

46. Do you want to get control of the mine?—No; but I have seen instances where we should have had control of the mines to get things done.

47. Have you no confidence in the Inspectors?—I will not say that.

48. Can you not imagine a conflict between the two Inspectors? Supposing one said that a fan was needed, and the other that it was not. Who is to decide?—They would have to decide it between them.

49. *Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] If the workmen's Inspectors said that a fan was found to be necessary, and the Government Inspector said that it was not, a telegram should be sent to the Minister of Mines, and he should decide?—Yes. It is my opinion that natural ventilation should not be allowed, and the condition of the Blackball Mine proves that, because since they have had a fan the mine is one of the best in the colony.

50. *Mr. J. Allen.*] You say that the "shift-boss" should have certain experience?—Yes.

51. What I want to know is what you mean by "a thorough knowledge of ventilation"? Does it not require a lot of scientific knowledge?—We consider "thorough knowledge" to mean the ordinary practical knowledge of a workman.

52. Do you think the Inspector of Mines is a proper person to conduct that examination?—We think so, but that is for the Department to say.

53. Do you think there would be uniformity if the Inspectors of the various districts conducted the examinations?—That I cannot say.

54. What are the costs of the administration of the Coal-miners' Accident Fund?—What we pay, I think, is £30 a year. That is conjointly with our own.

55. Do you not think that this fund is for those who are hurt and that it would be better to allow the fund to remain intact, and that the men themselves should do a little towards those who get sick?—Well, we are here to represent the opinions of a body of our people, and they passed that resolution. All we ask is for 2½ per cent. of the money raised every year.

56. And take it away from the fund for those poor people who are hurt?—We have to find all the provision for labour in connection with the fund.

57. Do you not think clause 14, in reference to check inspectors having power to have any practice or thing discontinued which they consider to be dangerous or injurious to the health of the workmen is an interference with the management of the mine?—No, I do not think so.

58. But it is a question of decision?—If I went into a mine under the present system, and saw a place which was going to fall in, I could not say "Take these men out of this place." I have no power to do it, nor have I the power to order the men out if the air is bad.

59. Do you think a check inspector should have power to decide without consulting the mine-manager?—This is only a suggestion, and I quite agree that the manager and Inspector should consult on such matters.

60. Who is to decide whether a place is likely to be dangerous or injurious to the health of the men—the check inspector or the mine-manager?—I say the two should decide.

61. Is the mine-manager to give up his functions as mine-manager?—I should not think so. I would not ask for that. I think that if I suggested a certain thing and the manager would not meet me, and an accident happened after that, the mine-manager should be hanged.

62. Now with regard to the hours of labour: you told us of the decision of the Arbitration Court on the West Coast. Can you give us the reasons that led the Court so to decide?—I can give you no reasons why the Court did not decide.

63. Did the Court give any reasons?—It gave a lot of reasons, but they were not reasons to our mind.

64. What were they?—I do not remember. You can find them in the *Labour Journal*.

65. In reference to the inflammable gas. Do you think the regulations already existing with regard to the use of safety-lamps are not broad enough?—No.

66. With regard to the employment of boys: I understand you want to raise the age from thirteen to fourteen?—Yes.

67. Why?—Because I say that a boy going into a mine at fourteen years of age is quite young enough.

68. Do you not think he is young enough at thirteen?—I think he is then too young.

69. We prevent him going into a mine under the age of thirteen, and you want to raise the age to fourteen?—Yes.

70. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Take clause No. 2: "The workmen's inspectors to be permitted to visit the scene of an accident immediately an accident occurs." How do you propose to have those inspectors appointed?—They would be appointed by the union.

71. One in each mine?—Two in each mine.

72. And do you expect the taxpayers to pay for them?—We are asking for that. The law gives us power to appoint two.

73. What are their duties to be?—To inspect the mine right through.

74. Would they work with the Inspector of Mines or have equal power?—No. I take it that although they would have power if the Government paid them, they would be in the position to report fully in the book and say if any coal was being lost or anything else, but under the present system the Inspector has no power.

75. You really wish to have a sub-inspector in each mine?—Yes.

76. At all events, in each large mine?—Yes. I say it should apply to all parts of the country.

77. Do you think fans are necessary up in Denniston?—Yes; we have a fan at Denniston.

78. In all the workings?—Yes.

79. Do you think that the sealing-off is not sufficient?—I think it is a dangerous practice, and that there should be sufficient air going into the mine to clear it of all dangerous gases. The 100 cubic feet per man and horse is not sufficient to ventilate the mine.

80. You consider that there should be an extra quantity for every acre of old workings?—Yes.

81. This will be very expensive, will it not?—I do not think so.

82. Take suggestion No. 10, with regard to the shift-boss and so on: do you not think that every one before being allowed to go into a coal-mine, should be compelled to pass an examination?—I do not know what examination he could pass. A person must go into a mine to acquire knowledge.

83. That is so, but if he should go in as a boy he would be under some one else's supervision?—Yes.

84. You told us just now of cases where men had gone into a mine who had not been in to work before?—Yes, and who were allowed to carry a lamp.

85. You think that before a man should be allowed to go there at all he should pass an examination?—If a man came to me and asked for a job, and said he was not a miner, I should decide whether he should go in or not, but because he had not been in a mine before that would be no reason why he should not go in.

86. Do you not think the present law is sufficient to protect the lives of the workmen?—We do not think it is. We want the shift-bosses to go through an examination.

87. I quite agree that they should be qualified miners, but I want to go a little further, and suggest that every man should know something about mining, and should feel his responsibility?—We should have people start with us the same as in any other industry—start when young; but that would be very hard to some people, and would put many a good man out of a job.

88. You have been trying to get preference given to unionists?—Yes.

89. Do you think there should be preference to unionists in a coal-mine?—I think so.

90. Do you think you could then depend upon having reliable men?—You would put these men in a position to know their duties before they went in.

91. How do you justify your proposal of double pay for Sunday work?—In all other industries men are paid double pay for Sunday work, and we think coal-miners are entitled to it also.

92. Take clause 14 in reference to check inspectors: do you not think this could be used to the detriment of the men in the mine? Have you given this serious consideration?—I do not think the unions would appoint unscrupulous people.

93. Look at the matter from this point of view: unionists have been charged with refusing to work in a mine, might they not get the inspectors to say that the mine was not safe and so stop the working of the mine?—I do not think they could do that. The Inspector of Mines at the present time has power to stop working in any section of the mine.

94. Coming to the award of the Arbitration Court, why did you accept that?—The reason was this: We as a body got advice on the matter and three courses were pointed out—first, to take the case to the Supreme Court to try to get the decision withdrawn; the next was to file a reference again; and the third course was to come to Parliament to see if we could not make what we wanted mandatory.

95. What was the period of your award?—Two years.

96. Had the two years expired then?—It was nearly three years. Next March it would be four years.

97. And could the Court compel you to work under the old award?—They did not alter it. The law says distinctly that so long as an award is in force you must abide by it.

98. The period of the award was two years?—Yes; and it never was altered.

99. It was a year after that before the Court sat to decide again?—It was nine months. We are in this position now, that we could file again to-morrow and they could do the same thing again. If they were justified in doing it last time they would be justified in doing it again. We took this course—

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

their pay. I think about half a mile, or thereabouts, would be enough and would suit us very well; even then the major portion of the men would have to walk considerably further. I would like to know if "mine" in the Bill means "mine-area," because the boundary might be a long way from the mine-mouth. I refer to section 7 of the Bill.

124. That means the mine-mouth?—Well, I think that half a mile from the mine-mouth, or thereabouts, would suit every purpose. With regard to suggestion No. 7, "That miners' unions be empowered to take extracts from time-books and wages-sheets," we desire that amendment because we do not always know the rates that are paid to the miners. There are about a dozen different branches of labour, consisting of shift-men, fillers, truckers, firemen, engine-drivers, horse-drivers, &c., and they are all paid at different rates, and we are at a loss to know what rates they are paid at. In the event of a dispute arising we have found that they have been paid less, and by being empowered to take a copy of the books we should be in a position to know what they were being paid.

125. Would it suit you if, as was suggested when Mr. Foster was giving evidence, you got duplicates of the pay-sheets?—Yes.

126. With regard to clause 6, "That provision be made for a superannuation fund for the benefit of all coal-miners," do you agree with that?—Yes; but I have only knowledge of our own case. Our fund was put separately under the Denniston fund, and then we registered ourselves in May, 1900, and up to the present time £1,800 approximately has accumulated. At present before a man can get employment he has to go through a very rigid examination, and then if he happens to be off through taking a holiday or in consequence of any slight cold or sickness he is subject to examination again. The result is that a considerable number of miners may be out of employment when they are contributing to this fund. I should like to see the fund made a colonial fund, and if the various funds could be reduced to one general fund the scheme might be worked very easily.

127. *Mr. J. Allen.*] You said the miners contributed to this sick and accident fund. I do not know what means. Who does directly pay?—The public, I think; the industry, we say.

128. But who does the law compel to pay?—The mine-owner.

129. With reference to this superannuation scheme, have you thought out how the thing could be worked, what benefits should be given to the miner, and how the funds are going to be provided to meet these benefits? It is a very difficult thing?—It is a very big thing; but is it quite necessary. We base it on this $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton fund, but we will contribute proportionately.

130. Have you any idea as to what benefits the miners should receive from the superannuation fund?—Yes; assistance to those rendered medically unfit by accident or age.

131. Do you intend that it should apply to miners retiring at a certain age?—Certainly, a miner is medically unfit then.

132. Not necessarily. Do you know anything of the ordinary superannuation schemes?—Yes.

133. A man has to retire at a certain age and he gets certain benefits?—Yes.

134. Have you thought it out at all?—Yes; it would apply in such a case.

135. What benefits would a miner get—so-much percentage of his earnings?—We do not want any distinction to be made in the wages. There are no big wages, as far as we are concerned.

136. Have you any idea of the number of miners employed?—We have about four hundred at our place.

137. There are about 2,800. How many of them are retiring each year? Have you any idea what funds would be required to provide for superannuation?—I would make it optional, not compulsory, and let those who wished to embrace it do so, as in the Railway Department. Those who wish to join should pay half and the industry should pay the other half.

138. *Mr. Herries.*] You have a Miners' Union?—Yes.

139. That has a sick fund, I suppose?—No; we have a medical association.

140. If any subsidy were given to provide for superannuation I suppose it would be better if under the control of the union?—Under the medical association, that controls the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a ton fund with us.

141. You are not working under preference to unionists?—No; but it is understood by the management as well as by us that the men have to join. There are officials who are not in the union, but who are under the medical association.

142. Would it not be possible for the medical association to get a superannuation scheme of its own?—That would be different so far as the miners are concerned; but say that we are working here and a new mine is opened next to us and the men agree to change places: if anything happens there is nothing to meet that.

143. You want a fund for the miners generally?—Yes; for the whole colony.

144. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Why do you think that a superannuation fund is necessary for miners and not for others?—Simply because they are discarded now so far as the fund is concerned, and when they leave have to look for work elsewhere.

145. Does that not apply to other men?—I know of no other men who have to pass an examination and get no benefits if they are thrown out of work.

146. Do you not think the character of the employment is a justification for a superannuation fund?—Yes.

147. Have you gone into this question in any way thoroughly?—Yes, so far as our own mine is concerned. I have based my views on that.

148. Have you considered how much the men would have to pay at certain ages?—I think we should have to pay something if the scheme were subsidised by the State.

149. The scheme would be similar to that of the Railway people?—Well, they had no basis to work on, and we have.

150. Have you the sick and accident fund and consider that as a start?—Yes, and the Railway people had no fund to start on.

151. Supposing a man left the colony—because there are men who come and go?—We would rather the scheme applied to the permanent hands.

152. Have you any objection to gold-miners being included?—We would be quite willing if they got the gold royalty.

153. The more lives you had in it the more likely the scheme would stand?—Yes, but the gold-mining industry has no charge on it, while the coal industry has.

154. Have you ever considered the question of compulsory insurance for people working in a mine?—Yes, but the point we hold is that the industry ought to bear its own evils.

155. *Mr. Smith.*] You want to insure sufficient funds for burying a man if he dies through sickness?—Yes.

156. If he belongs to a friendly society, would that not meet the case?—We have to keep a doctor out of our own earnings, and then if we belong to a friendly society we have to subscribe for two doctors. It costs us 1s. a week for the doctor independently of the medical fund.

157. Do you not think it would have been better, if you want a superannuation scheme, to have gone into it actuarially and come prepared?—Yes, it would have been better, no doubt.

158. It is a very deep question?—Yes.

159. Would it not be better to drop it and allow it to come up at some future time?—Yes; I am quite willing to do that.

160. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] You are working for the Westport Coal Company?—I am.

161. You understand the medical examination that the men have to pass before they are allowed to work?—Yes.

162. Have your union any objection to it?—They disapprove of it.

163. You consider it objectionable?—Yes.

164. Do you know the list of requirements?—I know it is the severest test in the country. I know the examination is a very, very stringent one.

165. *The Chairman.*] Can you tell us why this medical test has been imposed?—Well, previously the company did their insurance through some accident company, but now they do it themselves.

166. How long have they been doing it themselves?—I could not tell you from memory.

167. Is it over four years?—I do not think it is over four years, but it is over two years.

168. And that is the reason of the severe test now—because the company is doing its own insurance under the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act?—Yes. If a man goes off for a week he has to go through the examination again.

169. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Can you tell the Committee what they pay for accidents?—They put 3d. per ton extra on the coal for that.

GEORGE NEWTON examined. (No. 3.)

170. *The Chairman.*] You are a miner from Brunnerton?—Yes.

171. Do you hold any office in the union there?—I am president of the Coal-miners' Union.

172. Will you kindly give the Committee your opinion as to the suggestions that have been put forward by the Trades and Labour Council?—I will just deal with one or two. I will take No. 16, dealing with the use of safety-lamps where various sections of a mine contain inflammable gas and are connected one with the other by workings of any description. I have had a long experience in mining and have worked in a good many gassy mines in the old Country. I have also had a little experience of gassy mines in New Zealand, and I quite concur that this clause 16 should be inserted in the Act to prevent the using of mixed lights in such mines. There is no question that if they had been using all safety-lamps in the Brunner mine that explosion would not have occurred. About fifteen months ago a similar thing occurred, but the men were all working with safety-lamps. If that had not been the case there would have been a recurrence of the accident. Just as we were going into the mine one morning a heavy fall came away, and some of the men met the concussion of this fall, which put their lights right out. A sufficient quantity of gas was there to cause an explosion similar to the previous one if mixed lights had been in use. The miners are not satisfied with the present regulations, and hence they want to make it compulsory that wherever there is known to be inflammable gas in part of the mine connected with workings safety-lamps shall be used. I have a report here from the check inspector at the same mine, and will read it to the Committee: "Brunner, 4th August, 1905.—This is to certify that we have examined all the working-places in the Brunner Mine and found them in good working-order. All the roadways and air-courses in good condition, plenty of good mining-timber on hand. We have also examined the report-books and found them up to date. No gas reported. Tyneside Mine: This is to certify that we have this day examined all the working-places in the Tyneside Mine, and found them all in good working-order. Roadways and air-courses in good condition, plenty of good mining-timber on hand. We have also examined all report-books and found gas reported by the fireman nearly every day in one or two places.—THOS. JONES, JOSEPH BEYNON." I might say that in the last annual report the Inspector gave he said that gas had been seen once in the Tyneside Mine, and I want to give an explanation on that particular point. It had only been seen once by the check inspector, but the reason for that is that they go in at mid-day when the men have been at work for a half-shift. The deputies examine the mine and they have reported gas not less than three or four times every week in their report-book, and the Government Inspector has never mentioned that in his report.

173. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] Have you made any complaint or referred to it in any way?—I do not know that we have ever mentioned it.

174. Have you complained to any one?—It was written in the deputies' report. It was written that gas was seen over three days in the week on an average in one or two places.

175. Which mine was this?—The Tyneside Mine. It is a well-ventilated mine or it would not be possible to work with anything but safety-lamps, but we think that no other lamps than safety-lamps should be used in any mine that gives off inflammable gas.

176. *The Chairman.*] Have you anything else to say?—With regard to the fan, I think it is highly desirable that any mine where artificial ventilation is required ought to be ventilated by means of a fan. It is admitted to be the best mode of ventilation, and I think it is an important matter for the safety of life as well as the protection of health.

177. *Mr. J. Allen.*] With regard to the gas in the Tyneside Mine, you know the powers of inspection the miners possess under the Act of 1901: that they can appoint two inspectors to inspect every part of the mine?—Yes.

178. Was that done in this case?—Yes.

179. Did they make the report in the book that is provided for under that Act?—Yes.

180. Did they put down the number of times that they saw gas?—Yes, but only once.

181. Why did they not report more often?—Because they go in after the mine has been worked a few hours. The deputy goes in before the men go in.

182. Did the deputy report gas more frequently?—Yes.

183. Who to?—In the report-book. The report-book is kept at the deputy's cabin every day.

184. To whom is the report open?—To anybody.

185. That book is open to the Inspector?—Yes.

186. And it is open to the mine-manager?—Yes, and the miners as well.

187. So that there could be no secrecy about it?—No.

188. With regard to using safety-lamps: you know that under Regulation 55 the manager, under certain circumstances may order safety-lamps only to be used?—Yes.

189. You want to have that simplified?—Yes, to make it compulsory that nothing but safety-lamps shall be used in a mine giving off inflammable gas.

190. What quantity, for instance, would you say that a mine should be giving off—there might be a great deal or very little? We want to draw the line somewhere?—Yes. I could not give you the quantities of gas discovered in the Tyneside Mine, but it is stated in the report-book that gas has been discovered in one or two places every morning.

191. I do not think you would desire to compel a mine, where there is a little inflammable gas in one place, to be worked with safety-lamps all over the mine; admitting the connection and that the gas is there, it may not be enough to be a matter of danger, and in such a case would you wish to work that mine with safety-lamps?—Yes; where there is any gas at all there is always danger. I have worked in a mine considered to be not giving off much gas, but in particular places there have been quantities of gas discovered.

192. You think the miners would not object to be compelled to use safety-lamps even where very little gas is being given off?—I do not think that is the general opinion of miners, but in any case I think people who have not sufficient discretion to take care of their own lives should have other people to look after them.

193. You differ from some of the other miners?—I differ from some of them, but these propositions are from the miners.

194. *Mr. Smith.*] What is the mine-manager's name in the Tyneside Mine?—Mr. Allison.

195. Is he a competent man?—Oh, yes. The Government have sufficient power to order the use of safety-lamps.

196. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Is not that sufficient?—No; I do not think so.

197. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Have the men any objection to using safety-lamps?—I cannot say that they have because these propositions are sent up from the lodge of the Miners' Union. I know there is a lot of miners who have an objection to working with safety-lamps, but that is no reason why this provision should not be put in the Act, because some miners have an objection to setting sprags, but the law compels them to do it for their own safety; hence we want this clause put in the Mines Act to make it compulsory that safety-lamps shall be used where inflammable gas is known to exist. We want that made known irrespective of what certain miners may say. Everybody likes daylight better than dark, but there is a great deal of difference between the two.

198. You say that in the Tyneside Mine gas has been found on two or three days in the week?—Yes.

199. Does not the fireman go into the mine and chalk up in the place he visits the day of the month?—Yes.

200. And then he fixes up the mine-report before the men go in?—Yes, every morning.

201. And if the finding of gas is reported in the book, you say he should have reported it to the Inspector?—The Inspector himself could have ascertained from the report-book if gas was found in the mine.

202. And you say it has only been reported on one occasion?—Yes.

203. Do you complain about the Inspector for neglecting his duty?—I think he has neglected his duty. He stated that it had only been once found in the Tyneside Mine. It was equally his duty to report what the deputy had reported in the book on that particular subject.

204. How often does the Inspector go there—once in three months?—Yes.

205. Supposing he examines the mine-manager's report-book for every day in the three months, would it have been his duty to call attention to that?—Yes.

206. How is the Tyneside Mine being worked—through the same shaft at the station?—Yes.

207. Is there a tunnel through the river?—Yes; but they have a fan down a winding-shaft. That is the return. The men go in at the tunnel and not down the shaft.

208. How is the ventilation?—It is good.

209. Are the old workings sealed off?—No; there are just temporary stoppings put in. There is not a great deal of ground opened up. There are no pillars taken out yet.

210. Tell us your opinion generally about the old workings?—My opinion is that there ought to be a certain quantity of air circulating round the old workings to prevent large accumulations of gas. When heavy falls take place, and there are weak stoppings, the gas is brought down and there is a danger of explosion.

211. Do you think it would be better to seal the old workings?—There must be stoppings put in.

212. But if you could seal the old workings off you could have an air-gauge?—Ycs.

213. Do you think that would prevent the accumulation of gas?—Yes, that would carry the gas off into the retort.

214. Take the Brunner Mine: there is a large amount of old workings there. Would you not require an enormous current of air to clear the old workings out?—Yes, but the air lies dead. We refer to the workings outside of those, where the pillars have not been taken out.

215. You do not mean that portion of the mine which has been worked out altogether, but those parts of the mine standing idle without any working-faces?—Yes.

216. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] Do you consider the inspection of the mines by the Government Inspector—the Tyneside Mine or any other mine—is efficiently carried out? In other words, is there any neglect on the part of the Inspector of Mines?—I could not say there was any neglect.

217. Can you give us a more definite opinion—your own opinion—as to whether the mines are properly inspected or not?—I am not working in that mine now.

218. Well, in any mine that you are working in?—I have heard some of the men just say in a loose conversational way that Mr. Hanlon would just come to the top of the mine and ask how they were getting on.

219. Do you not think a proper Mining Inspector would be able to see if a mine were sufficiently ventilated or not?—Oh, yes. I have walked about 14 chains into a drive at Reefton when prospecting, and found the air to change every day for a certain time.

220. But there would be no fan there?—No.

221. *The Chairman.*] From your knowledge, do you think the Government inspection of the mines is satisfactory?—I have no fault to find with it further than in connection with that report.

222. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] And not for what is in it, but for what is not in it?—Yes.

223. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] You know the Inspector of Coal-mines for the West Coast?—Yes.

224. And know that he has to inspect all the mines from Westport to the Haast?—Yes.

225. And down as far as Puponga?—Yes.

226. And also Marlborough?—Yes.

227. How much time does he spend in travelling during three months?—I think his district is too large, and that he ought to have some assistance.

228. Do you think he can properly inspect any mine, and do such a vast amount of travelling?—No.

229. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] Do you say that there is no coal-mine properly inspected on the Coast?—I do not say that.

230. As far as you know they are properly inspected?—As far as I know they are properly inspected, as well as it is possible for the Inspector to do considering the large area he has to inspect.

231. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] How often do you think the Brunner Mine, say, ought to be inspected?—Perhaps once in a couple of months by the Inspector of Mines.

232. Who is going to do the inspection in the meantime?—The check inspector goes round once a month.

233. You think once in two months would be sufficient for the Inspector of Mines?—It would be better if he could go round once a month.

234. Sometimes there is an accident, say, at Puponga, and he is called away there when possibly he ought to be visiting Brunnerton, so that possibly he cannot inspect your mine once in six months?—Yes, that would delay him.

235. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] Have you known any mine not to be inspected more frequently than once in six months?—Yes.

FRIDAY, 18TH AUGUST, 1905.

HENRY BETTS examined. (No. 4.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council of Westland.

2. You are here to give evidence on behalf of that body in connection with the Bill before the Committee and the suggestions put in by the delegates?—Yes. I can corroborate the evidence of previous witnesses as to the necessity of providing that the explosives used in mines shall be the best procurable from a health point of view. I also corroborate their evidence given in connection with clause 5 of the suggestions as to payment for deaths through sickness as well as through accident—that is, if the funds will permit it. I understand it will if the fund is consolidated. I have not gone through the provision for a superannuation fund. I concur with the suggestion that miners' unions be empowered to take extracts from pay-sheets and books, and consider it necessary that the unions should have that power. In addition to the reasons already given I might state another reason—namely, that if the unions had this power they would be able to know whether the wages or prices provided by an award were being paid by the employers to the men. With regard to clause 8, I might make this a little clearer than previous witnesses. If you look at the general rules applying to coal-mines, you will see that the

miner has to satisfy himself about his safety-lamp even after the fireman or lamp-trimmer has handed him the lamp; and what we are asking for is that he shall be supplied with the means of satisfying himself—that is, a gas-tester—so that these rules can be carried out. I must corroborate the evidence given by the previous witnesses to the effect that fans are best for the purpose of artificial ventilation, and think they should be used in preference to any other method. With reference to the proposed examination of a shift-boss, fireman, or deputy in a mine by the Inspector of Mines on gases before he is allowed to carry a closed lamp to detect gas, and in ventilation and timbering, I might point out that with regard to carrying these lamps the ordinary miner is not referred to in this clause. It is only the fireman who has to go round and examine a mine each shift before miners are allowed to go in. This is the man who should have the experience, and we are not referring to the ordinary miner at all in connection with this matter. I can corroborate the evidence with regard to payment for Sunday work and overtime, and in addition might state that it is provided for in different awards made in the Arbitration Court outside of mining altogether, and therefore I think it should be a recognised thing so far as miners are concerned. Special legislation has been passed dealing with Sunday labour in mines and it has been carried on unduly in past years, although special legislation was passed to prevent it. We say that if it is absolutely necessary that a man should be compelled to lose his opportunity for recreation on Sunday he should be paid for it—that if he is denied the pleasures of his home on Sundays he should be compensated for it. If it is to the advantage of his employer that he should work on Sunday, the miner should receive some consideration for the work. There is no need for me to dwell on this, because it is recognised as a general principle the world over. I will not say anything as to item 12. With regard to clause 13, that check inspectors be paid by the Mines Department whilst employed inspecting the mine, I think that is only right and proper. There is no doubt that the fact of the Miners' Unions appointing competent persons to go through the mines and inspect the different workings relieves the Inspector of Mines of a large amount of responsibility, for they really do the work that the Government ought to do, and which would require to be done if the Miners' Unions did not appoint persons to do it. As regards the West Coast, I may say this, that, even with the inspection carried on by the Miners' Unions, the Inspectors do not visit the mines often enough. I know some mines in the Reef-ton district that have not been visited for three months at a time, and I do not think that is right. I think the Government Inspectors should be compelled to visit the mines at shorter periods. The workers' inspectors should be empowered to inspect because it takes a certain amount of responsibility off the Department, which should pay these men for doing the work. Then as regards clause 14, I may say that we consider that a provision of this kind is absolutely necessary. At the present time we have no power to tell a manager that he will have to discontinue doing a certain thing which we know to be wrong—all we can do is to report it. The report is put into the mine-book and the Inspector comes along, perhaps, a month after, and I do not think he always looks into the book to see what the check inspectors' reports are. There are many things that have been reported upon by the check inspector that the Inspector of Mines has not paid sufficient attention to—in fact, the Inspectors have ignored the recommendations of check inspectors and practices have gone on which ought to have been stopped. I know I have had occasion, as workmen's inspector in the Reef-ton district —

3. *Mr. Herries.*] Are you speaking of coal-mines?—No, of gold-mines. I have had to call the attention of the Inspector of Mines to different practices, and even after drawing his attention to them no notice has been taken of them. I have gone so far as to approach the Mines Department, and could not get them to move in the matter, and then I have had to go to the Health Department. It is necessary if these check inspectors are to be of any account at all, that they should have some power given to them. Then as to the hours of labour—that they should not be more than eight hours from surface to surface in any one shift. I do not know that I can add anything to what has been stated, except to say that it is only a fair and proper suggestion that miners should be allowed to come out of the mine after having been there eight hours. Of course, necessity may arise when they would have to stop longer than eight hours in a mine, but the provision in "The Coal-mines Act Amendment Act, 1901," clause 6, reads in this way: "Subject to the provisions of the Act a miner shall not be employed underground for a longer period in any day than eight hours, exclusive of meal-times." The only objection we had to that clause when it was passed was inclusion of those words in it, "exclusive of meal-times." All we asked Parliament to do was to strike those words out. Section 2 of the same clause says, "Such period of eight hours shall be deemed to commence from the time the miner enters the mine, and to finish when he leaves the mine." Section 3 of the clause goes on to say, "The prescribed number of working-hours may from time to time be exceeded, but on every such occasion wages shall be paid for such extended hours at not less than one-fourth as much again as the ordinary rate." Now that clause suited us admirably, with the exception of those words "exclusive of meal-times." The same thing applies to the Mining Act.

4. *Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] What would be the working-hours?—Eight hours from surface to surface.

5. But if you exclude the meal-times, what would be the hours?—The meal-time usually allowed is half an hour. These words have been struck out in the later amendment, but this provision has not been struck out, "The prescribed number of working-hours may from time to time be exceeded, but on every such occasion wages shall be paid for such extended hours at not less than one-fourth as much again as the ordinary rate." That is repealed, and the same provision in the Mining Act is repealed.

6. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Do you want them put back again?—Yes, with the exception of section 1 of clause 6, which says "exclusive of meal-times." We want the whole of clause 6 re-enacted with the exception of those words "exclusive of meal-times." I might point out that the legislation at present is that we are entitled to the eight hours' labour from surface to surface, subject to the provisions of any award of the Arbitration Court now in force. Well, the Arbitration Court has deprived us as miners

of getting the benefit that the Legislature intended to give us, by not making an award. Whether they did a legal thing or not I am not prepared to say, but they put us in this position, that we should have an interminable labour trouble. But we do not want to be continually at war with our employers, and we say the Arbitration Court did not do its duty. We believe we could have compelled them, by a writ of mandamus in the Supreme Court, to give an award, but it would have cost us a lot of money, and I am not prepared to say what would have been the result. All we ask is that the Legislature should give us eight hours from surface to surface without any reference to the Arbitration Court at all, or making it subject to anything. With regard to clause 16 of the suggestions in relation to the use of naked lights where inflammable gas is known to exist in sections of the mine, I must corroborate the evidence given by previous witnesses. I may add this also, that the danger of allowing safety-lamps to be used in one section of the mine where gas exists, and naked lights in other sections, is this, that the gas is carried by the air-current through sections connected with others, and the result is that if you allow mixed lights you are in continual danger of explosions. I think it is a fair request to make, and it ought to be granted to prevent loss of life. I do not know that I have any more to say with regard to these points.

7. You have said that the proviso to clause 6 subsection (3) has been repealed: "The prescribed number of working-hours may from time to time be exceeded"?—I say the whole of that section has been repealed.

8. Has it been re-enacted?—Portion of it has been re-enacted.

9. I am talking of the proviso?—No.

10. Do you mean to say anything has been re-enacted?—There has been no overtime fixed. The Coal-mines Act Amendment Act of 1903, clause 2, says, "Subject to the provisions of any award now in force under 'The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, 1900,' a miner shall be entitled to be paid overtime when he is employed underground in a mine for more than eight hours in any day, counting from the time he enters the underground workings of the mine to the time he leaves the same."

11. Is that not practically the same thing as subsection (3) of section 6 of the Act of 1901?—No; the difference is this: that no overtime rate is prescribed. There is a provision made for paying the miner for extra time—the same daily rate as he is employed at.

12. What does "overtime" mean?—Overtime is time worked over ordinary time.

13. Is that your Arbitration Court award? You are speaking for the miners on the West Coast?—I am not speaking of any award regulating the work in coal-mines.

14. *The Chairman.*] You are giving evidence under the Coal-mines Act?—Yes. My evidence is this: that there is no special rate paid for overtime under that Act.

15. *Mr. J. Allen.*] I am asking you if you know of the existence of any Arbitration Court award on the Coast?—I do not know. I believe there is one at Brunnerton.

16. Do you know of any Arbitration Court award in force on the Coast—say with regard to the Westport Coal Company?—No.

17. Are they not working under an award?—They are working under an award that has expired.

18. What is the rate for overtime that is provided in that award which you say has expired?—I could not tell you. I am not sufficiently conversant with it to know. I do not know anything at all about it.

19. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] You say that there is no award on the West Coast at the present time. Is not this the case, that after the Arbitration Court sat in Westport in March, as is published in the *Labour Journal* for April, they decided, "Apart from the difficulties arising out of the impossibility of avoiding doing injustice, we find it impracticable to make a workable award. For the foregoing reasons we have decided that the only course open to us in each of these cases is to make no award"?—That is the decision of the Arbitration Court.

20. Do you think the unions on the West Coast would be justified, under this decision of the Arbitration Court, in stopping work altogether at the present time?—My opinion is this, that they would have been justified in striking.

21. Do you think they could make a good case out against the Arbitration Court for refusing to make an award?—My opinion is, after consulting a solicitor, that the Arbitration Court did an illegal thing.

22. Do you know of any reasons that the Court gave for refusing to make an award so far as the West Coast is concerned?—I feel satisfied that they could not have gone into the different matters.

23. Do you think you were justified in asking for eight hours from bank to bank?—In Reefton it would have made very little difference, because nearly the whole of the mines were working eight hours from bank to bank.

24. Do you know the balance-sheet that the Westport Company publish annually?—I never saw it in the papers. My reason for saying that the Arbitration Court could not have carefully considered the evidence tendered before it is on account of its own judgment. They show gross ignorance as to the hours of labour worked. They say that the coal-miners are differently situated from the gold-miners.

25. Supposing the Arbitration Court ignored the law and constituted itself the judge of the law in the award: you want the eight hours from bank to bank fixed so that the Court cannot hereafter interfere—you want a statutory law to fix it?—That is so. We consider the Court took up that position to deprive us of the benefits the Legislature intended to give us as miners.

26. With regard to explosives, there is a list of explosives provided?—Yes.

27. If there are any explosives which a committee of experts said should not be on the list, would you be satisfied if they were struck off the list?—Yes. We are quite satisfied that Mr. Hustwick, Inspector of Explosives, should check the explosives permitted to come into the colony for use, choosing

those which he considered to be the most effective and the best from a health point of view. There is a lot of these new explosives used in the mines that are very injurious to the health of the workmen compared with other explosives, and mine-owners should not be allowed to use any class of explosives they think proper, because the miners are entitled to consideration.

28. If you got a list of explosives which were proved to be the best put into a schedule by Act of Parliament, would you bar any other explosive from being used in a mine?—If the Inspector of Explosives said he was satisfied that any new explosive should go upon the list, certainly it should be put there. We do not want to be deprived of any new explosive that might come into use, so long as it is not injurious to the health of the workers.

29. You would approve of new explosives, but they must be good?—Certainly.

30. *Mr. Herries.*] Can you speak for the North Island?—To a certain extent I can.

31. Are they in accord with you?—Yes, I think so.

32. You are in communication with them?—Yes. The Coal-miners' Unions in the North Island have agreed—all of them—to join the Miners' Federation that we propose to bring into existence in this colony.

33. They have seen these proposals?—No; I have not sent them on to them.

34. You do not know whether they would agree to them?—I am certain they would agree to all of them.

35. With regard to Government Inspectors, you referred to both coal and gold?—Yes.

36. You say that their visits are very infrequent?—Yes.

37. How long has a mine been without a visit from the Government Inspector?—It has been as long as three months.

38. Is that a common thing?—I will not say it is a common thing, but it has occurred.

39. *Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] From what period—how long back?—It is a few months ago. In fact, Mr. Tennent, the Inspector of Mines, has not visited some of the quartz-mines in Reefton for six months.

40. If more Government Inspectors were appointed would it do away with the necessity for having workmen's inspectors?—No, I do not think so. Under no consideration should the workmen's inspectors be done away with.

41. If the Government appointed more Inspectors of their own, would that not do away with the men's inspectors?—I do not think there would be any necessity for Government to appoint any more permanent Government Inspectors, provided they gave the workmen's inspectors more power.

42. Supposing the men's inspectors were receiving Government pay would they not become responsible to the Government instead of to the men?—They should be responsible to both.

43. Would that be compatible?—I think it is right and proper, if the Government pay these men, that they should be responsible people.

44. You are quite satisfied that a mine should not be inspected once in three months?—No, I am not, but I do think there is no necessity for appointing any more Government Inspectors. The present Inspector should make more inspections.

45. You consider it is not because they cannot make the visits in the time, it is simply that they will not?—They simply will not. I do not know what other business they have to do outside the mines.

46. Do you know anything about the State coal-mines?—No.

47. Is any one of the witnesses authorised to speak for the State coal-mines?—I do not think any of the witnesses here are working in the State coal-mines, but some of them can certainly speak with regard to them.

48. Do the State coal-miners desire to come under the Arbitration Act?—Certainly they do; we are going to wait upon the Premier in that connection. We think it is only right and proper that the State should be put in the same position as the private employer. It is the desire of the employees' organizations in connection with the State mines to come under the provisions of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act. They are, of course, affiliated with us as a Trades and Labour Council on the West Coast, and we know that that is their desire—that the Government should be placed in the same position as the private employers in that respect.

49. *Mr. Smith.*] With regard to the overtime not being fixed, is there any overtime being worked down in your district?—I might say that through the Arbitration Court refusing to do its duty the men are kept underground as long as nine hours, and are not paid for the hour over eight hours, or any portion of the time over the eight hours. They are not paid anything over the ordinary day's wages.

50. I want to know whether they are working any overtime down there?—Yes; I term it "overtime"—any time over eight hours from bank to bank.

51. What are they paid for that?—They are paid nothing at all.

52. Are there any men working in your district and getting paid for overtime?—There are occasions where men are employed outside the ordinary time doing work in the shifts, they are paid extra for that. In some instances they get paid as much as double time for that work, and I know several instances where they get time and a half.

53. *Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] What are you?—By occupation?

54. Yes?—Secretary of the Inangahua Miners' Union and permanent secretary of the Trades and Labour Council.

55. You are not following any occupation as a miner, or as a settler, or anything else?—That is at present my occupation. My last position was that of a miner and the men took me from that position to put me in my present position. I am a settler too.

56. You were a miner—what class of miner?—I have done coal-mining, but only odd shifts. I was a quartz-miner.

57. In what mine were you a coal-miner?—Only in small mines about the district.
58. Have you ever been working in a large coal-mine in your life?—Not in a large mine.
59. How long were you engaged in quartz-mines?—About twelve years.
60. And in quartz-mining, having had twelve years' experience, you speak with authority?—Yes. I have a very big idea of coal-mining, too, because I have often been in big mines.
61. On the West Coast, as compared with other districts, what relatively are the accidents in the mines—are they frequent or otherwise?—I cannot say as to the coal-mines, but speaking more definitely as regards quartz-mines in the Reefton district, I should say the accidents were very frequent.
62. What is the class of accident?—They can be put under three heads—fatal, serious, and minor.
63. What is the cause or class of gas accidents?—The cause in my opinion is not sufficient care taken in the working of the mine—care on the part of the mine-owners themselves. The miners themselves may be responsible for a few ordinary accidents.
64. You have made a statement now which is a gross reflection on the mine-owners: can you give any instance where the mine-owners have not exercised due care?—I can give cases where serious accidents have occurred.
65. There is an inquest held in such cases?—Not unless the accidents are fatal.
66. In the case of a fatal accident, have the juries given any verdict which has laid the blame at the mine-owners' doors?—They have in years past, but not recently.
67. Now in respect to the miners: if there is blame attachable to the miner he is held responsible?—Yes, under the Act.
68. Do you know of any occasion where that has been the case under the Mining Act?—Yes.
69. Can you state one?—Yes, in the Progress Mines recently, where the men were being lowered down the shaft in a cage. When they came to No. 3 chamber the chairs were left out and the men came down on the chairs in the cage. The damage done did not amount to a great deal, but those men might have been killed. I saw the men, and it is not generally known that they had a claim under the Mining Act, where there is negligence on the part of the mine-owner. I told them their best course was to send in a claim. The company paid them full wages during the time they were off work.
70. No amount of inspection on the part of the Mining Inspector would have obviated that?—No.
71. Can you give us any cases where there have been accidents that might have been avoided if there had been more frequent inspections by the inspectors?—Yes; most of the accidents would be avoided if a different system were adopted in the working of the mines. For instance, since these large British companies came to work the mines in the Reefton district, their system of timbering has not been so exact and so careful as the older companies, and there is a greater frequency of accidents. Take the Keep-it-Dark Mine, for instance; there has been no serious accident there for years until quite recently a man fell down from the surface in a pass; but that was nothing to do with the underground workings, and they have fewer accidents simply because there is a better system adopted in that mine than is adopted in the British companies' mines.
72. Have the unions or miners drawn the attention of the Inspector at any time to the insufficiency of timbering?—I cannot say that we have as regards timbering, but we have on different occasions to the necessity of providing better ventilation and sanitation. They have not done so as regards timbering or the frequency of accidents through the necessity for the use of more timber. Our experience of the Inspectors is this: that there is no use in making any complaints to them.
73. You and the Inspectors do not "play in the same backyard"?—No; we have not for some time past. I consider that any Inspector of Mines who comes into the Mining District of Reefton has as much right to come into the miners' union office and consult me as he has to go to the companies' offices.
74. And the Inspectors do not consult you?—No. I could give them any amount of information.
75. You do not suggest that that should be put into the legislation?—No.
76. If they do not come to you it is not your business to see them, is it?—I write to them occasionally.
77. If there is any danger to the men is it not your duty to see them or write to them?—I do write to them. Take as an instance the Golden Fleece Mine. I have complained to different Inspectors about the ventilation of that mine and the distribution of the air to the different faces, but no notice has been taken of it, and that has been going on for the last year or two.
78. Are there any other matters that you have drawn the attention of the Inspector of Mines to and they have not attended to them?—Yes, there is the condition of the roads—the levels—which require retimbering. In most of these the timbers are in a bad condition, and the men who are there to truck are more like horses than men, simply on account of the condition of the levels.
79. Have you written to the Inspector about that?—I brought it under their notice and complained to the management.
80. What is the number of quartz-mines in the district?—Practically there are only three companies now—the Progress Mines, the Consolidated, and the Keep-it-Dark. The Wealth of Nations and Golden Fleece are run by one of these companies. We have never had any complaint about the Keep-it-Dark Mine under local management, because it has been worked in a most excellent way.
81. How many big coal-mines are there on the West Coast?—There are the two State Collieries, Granity, Denniston, Blackball, Brunner, and Tyneside.
82. We will say there are a dozen mines, roughly speaking?—Yes.
83. There is an Inspector of Mines and a Sub-Inspector on the Coast, is there not?—Yes, and I believe the Inspectors go as far north as Cape Farewell.

84. On the West Coast we will say there are twelve mines, six or seven of them are large ones, and there are some small ones. Now you know the Nelson District?—I am not well acquainted with it, but I know the district about Collingwood.

85. Coming north, are there any other large mines that have to be inspected by Mr. Tennent and his Sub-Inspector?—You might class the Puponga Mine as another one, but I do not think you could take the Taitapu Mine.

86. We have got to the thirteenth mine, and you know the districts the Inspectors have to visit. According to your evidence we have nine big mines, three or four small ones about Reefton, and the Puponga Mine—that is about thirteen mines?—Yes.

87. Is that too much for two Inspectors to look after?—No, I do not think so; because three is no occasion to visit the very small concerns at short intervals: but these large mines should be visited at shorter intervals.

88. Then if the Inspectors were more energetic there is not too much for them to do?—No.

89. How do you account for the infrequency of these visits?—Waste of time, I should think, chiefly. But I might be wrong in making a statement of that kind. They may have clerical work to do for the Department that I know nothing about.

90. Can you tell us how they put in their time at all? Before the men are condemned I want to get some evidence from you as to how they spend their time?—I could not say. Of course they do not stop very long at Reefton—either of them—not so long as they should stop there. What they do when they are away I do not know.

91. Have there been any formal complaints lodged with the Inspector of Mines by the unions regarding the infrequency of the inspections?—I do not think there have. I think we have written the Inspector of Mines as to the infrequency of his visits.

92. But for some time past there have been no complaints?—No; I have given it up.

93. Have the miners made any complaints and asked you to bring them before the authorities?—No; I go round the mines myself.

94. Do you not think that if there was anything wrong the miners would be the first to “kick”?—Yes, but the miners have complained to me frequently about the ventilation.

95. Of what particular mine?—The chief mine is the Golden Fleece. There should be artificial ventilation there.

96. With regard to the men’s inspectors, do you not think that if these inspectors were paid by the Government they would consider themselves more Government men than workers’ men?—No; I think that by being elected by the workmen they would be trusted to look after their interests, and, being in the pay of the Government and perhaps being compelled to report to the Government, they would be much more particular in carrying out their duties.

97. Do you not think it would have the effect of giving them the Government “stroke”?—I do not think so. The members of the workmen’s union would soon get some one else who did not have the Government stroke.

98. Have you not found that a vigorous man when working for himself, the moment he has become engaged with the Government, has allowed his energy to depart?—That has not been my experience. I may say that many years ago I worked for the Government myself, and I always worked as hard as I could.

99. Where was that?—It was on the co-operative works.

100. *Mr. Herries.*] You gave an answer to the Premier in regard to accidents in quartz-mines: you stated that the number of accidents had increased since the English companies had taken over the mines?—Yes.

101. Have you any statistics to support that statement, or is it only your own opinion?—It is from my own personal knowledge.

102. What is the reason of that? Is it the system of working?—I do not think the system of working the mines is quite so good as it was under the local companies. It has not been so good since 1897.

103. Do they work under the contract system in those mines or by day-labour?—Generally it is day-labour.

104. Then you think that during the time the companies have had the mines and have been working them on day-labour, the number of accidents has increased?—Yes, compared with the previous management of the local companies.

105. You say there are enough Inspectors on the West Coast?—Yes, providing the powers of the workmen’s inspectors are increased and that they receive remuneration for their services from the Department.

106. Then you mean to say that there are not enough Inspectors?—I think there are enough Government Inspectors. That is my personal opinion.

107. If they all did their duty, or what the miners consider to be their duty, there are enough Inspectors?—I think it is absolutely necessary that there should be workmen’s inspectors in addition to Government Inspectors.

108. Do you think there are enough Government Inspectors on the Coast?—I do.

109. Do you think their inspection is efficient?—No.

110. Do you think it would be more efficient if there were more Inspectors?—No; unless the new Inspectors appointed were different men of course.

111. You mean that the present Inspectors are not well qualified?—I do not mean to say they are not qualified, but my opinion is that they could do more in looking after the health and safety of the men than they do.

112. Do you think that is owing to the instructions they get from the Department or through their own inability?—I do not think the Department would instruct them to be lax in their duty.

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.

137. *Mr. Herries.*] There it no stopping done?—No.

138. It is all being taken out by day-labour?—Yes.

139. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Do you know the number of mines that have to be inspected on the West Coast?—I enumerated twelve of what you might term fairly large mines.

140. What has been your experience of mining?—I have been mining for the last twenty years.

141. Have you ever held any responsible position as a miner?—Certainly.

142. Do you think you have any clear knowledge as to what the duties of an Inspector of Mines ought to be?—Yes.

143. What are they?—The duty of an Inspector of Mines, in my opinion, is to see first of all that the ventilation provided for a mine is sufficient and abundant. In the next place to see that the timbering of the mine is carried out on proper lines, and that the workings are carried on in a safe and secure way. In coal-mines, and even in quartz-mines, to ascertain what gases exist and the quantity of each of the gases, and generally to look after the safety and health of the miners.

144. Have you any intimate local knowledge of the West Coast?—Yes.

145. How much of it do you know?—I was born in the West Coast and have lived on it nearly all my life.

146. Have you ever been down to the Haast?—No.

147. Have you been to Okarito?—No.

148. Have you been down to the Wilberforce?—On the Canterbury side I have.

149. Have you any idea of the distance between the Haast and Okarito?—My idea of it would be that it is about sixty miles.

150. Have you any idea of the distance from Hokitika to Ross?—About thirty miles I think.

151. And from Hokitika to the Wilberforce Reefs?—Thirty-odd miles.

152. Is that the nearest you can get to it?—I have not been that way.

153. Supposing it is eighty miles?—I do not think it would be eighty miles.

154. Now, coming back, have you ever been up the Taipo and Gillie's Creek Reefs?—I have never been up to the Reefs but I know the direction they are in. I have been along the West Coast Road into the Taipo. That is not a great distance from Kumara. It might be twenty miles from the outside.

155. It is forty-five miles to the Reefs?—It might be. I have not been to the Reefs.

156. You say that two Inspectors are sufficient for all the mines between the Haast and Puponga, and from there down to Marlborough?—I might say that I do not think there are any workings going on at the Wilberforce and Kelly's Creek. I am talking about places where miners are working.

157. There are men often prospecting at the Wilberforce. How long do you think it would take a man to travel and inspect dredges, coal-mines, and quartz-mines from the Haast to Puponga down to Deep Creek in Marlborough?—My opinion is this, from my knowledge of the whole thing, that if they visit the twelve mines I enumerated this morning once a month and the other small mines once in two or three months, they would have ample time to do it in.

158. Do you know that these Inspectors have to inspect every mine where a man is employed either at dredging, sluicing claim, or in underground workings wherever they are?—Yes; but there are not many sluicing claims to inspect.

159. And if there are any prospecting claims which are subsidised by the Government they have to inspect them?—I am not aware of any. I know they have to report on the locality where prospecting is going on with local assistance before the grant is given by the local authority.

160. They have to report upon the amount of work done?—Yes.

161. How long do you think it would take a man to travel from the Haast to Puponga and to report on a mine every day?—Do you mean to take the whole of the mines right along?

162. Yes?—I daresay he would do it in a month.

163. How long does it take a man to inspect every mine from Westport to Reefton and down the Grey Valley?—I would give him a week at Westport, three days up the Buller, four days in Reefton, and a week to do the collieries down about Greymouth.

164. That is nineteen days for a distance of over a hundred miles?—Yes; that is the largest work of the whole lot, and there are two men to do it.

165. How long would it take a man to go from Greymouth to Taitapu and inspect the mine?—I daresay it would take him three days.

166. You have been there, have you not?—Yes.

167. How long did it take you?—It took me about three days from Reefton. It took me two days to Nelson. I am stating the outside as three days.

168. Did you do the trip from Nelson to Taitapu in a day?—Yes.

169. Your opinion is that the mines ought to be inspected once a month?—Yes; and I think the present Inspectors can do it.

170. You are not satisfied that the present inspection is satisfactory?—I am not.

171. What is the matter with it?—I think I have stated that before, but I will state it again. The matter with it is this: that in the first place I do not think the present Inspectors are suitable men for the position. In the next place they are not energetic enough, and there are some parts of the mines at Reefton that they have not been in for months.

172. You think it is the fault of the men and not the fault of the system?—I have not come here to find fault with the Inspectors, but you are forcing me to find fault with them.

173. You say you do not find fault with the men, and then you do find fault. I want to know whether you find fault with the men or the system?—There is no system. I do not know the system if there is one.

JOSEPH HOLLOWES examined. (No. 5.)

174. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am general secretary of the Otago Coal-miners Industrial Union of Workers.

175. You have read the Bill which is now before the Committee?—Yes.

176. And you are here to give evidence upon it?—That is so.

177. Will you state the particular clauses on which you wish to give evidence?—With regard to the Bill itself as printed, all I have to say is that I corroborate the evidence given by the previous witnesses, but we have other suggested amendments which I would like to give evidence upon particularly. With regard to clause 2 of the suggested amendments, I would say that that is desirable, and my reason for saying so is that in the event of an accident occurring, possibly the Inspector of Mines is sometimes a considerable distance away, and is therefore not able to be at the place where the accident occurs within, say, a day or two. We think it would be better if the workmen's inspectors were permitted to visit the scene of the accident immediately the accident occurred. Although there is no instance which has come under my notice where we have been prevented from doing so, still we have not applied to do so. The rule is to wait for the Inspector. At the same time we think it would be better if provision were made enabling the workmen's inspectors to visit the scene of an accident immediately after it occurred, as at present there is a doubt upon the point. With regard to clause 3, I might say that they do all pay at the mine's mouth, or within a very short distance of the mine's mouth, on the east coast of the South Island. I take this as a local or West Coast matter and it is very desirable, I think.

178. You are acquainted with the difficulties on the West Coast; you have worked there?—Yes. I know of instances where men, having finished their shift and wanting to draw their pay, have had to go down a distance of fully three miles. When men are tired out they do not care to travel such a distance, and in fact they have asked boys to fetch their money for them. If they went themselves, they perhaps got a glass or two and found themselves where they ought not to be. The men are engaged at the mine's mouth, and I consider they should be paid there. With regard to clause 4, if there is no provision for examining explosives from a health point of view there ought to be, and I think there ought to be an inspector for that purpose. Clause 5 (Accident Relief Fund to be made available for death through sickness) and clause 6 (provision for superannuation) I will leave over. Clause 7: I understand a suggestion has been made which will meet the views of the workers' representatives—viz., that the unions shall be provided with duplicates of the pay-sheets or pay-tickets. With regard to clause 8, I might say that there is a tester at Kaitangata worked by compressed air, but there is a doubt as to whether it is a proper gas-tester or not. In the Old Country, as a previous witness said, they have a kind of dome charged with some sort of gas, and I understand that acetylene gas will serve the purpose. The tester is charged, and the miner puts his own lamp in to test if it is sound or not. As for the cost of it, I believe it is a mere flea-bite. With regard to clause 9, dealing with the first portion of it, "That fans be at all times used where artificial ventilation is required," I would say that there is very great doubt in our minds about the use of furnaces.

179. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Are there any in use?—Yes.

180. Where?—In the Castle Hill Mine.

181. Is that the only one?—There is one at Nightcaps, and in some of the small mines. We had an explosion at the Castle Hill Mine recently. We do not know the result of the inquiry into that, but the gas is supposed to have ignited at the furnace or at the fire. If it ignited at the furnace, then it shows at once that it is possible for explosions to take place through the furnaces, and we feel very strongly on that. We consider that fans should be used to get rid of that danger. I visited the scene of the trouble myself, and although I saw no evidence within 30 or 40 yards of the furnace of the explosion, we met with evidence extending to 400 or 500 yards away, and very strong evidence; so that if it is possible for the firedamp to travel out and ignite at the furnace, then we say it ought to be stopped and fans put on. With regard to there being no evidence of any very great destruction in close proximity to the furnace, it is quite within the range of possibility for the gas to ignite at the furnace, and the forces or seat of the explosion to be further out. With regard to clause 10, perhaps the previous witnesses did not make it very clear as to what a shift-boss, fireman, or deputy in the mine should know before being allowed to carry a closed lamp. Personally, I think a shift-boss, fireman, or deputy should be an experienced man. He should understand timbering and how to conduct air to the faces.

182. You mean bratticing?—Yes. With regard to carrying a closed lamp to detect gas, of course, every miner where gas exists has to carry a safety-lamp, and it is part of his duty to examine his own working-place—his own place only. But, generally speaking, before a man takes the responsible duty of deputy he should have had at least five years' experience, and possess the qualifications I mentioned. He ought to know how to detect gas. And I offer this as a suggestion, which I think is a wise one, that very one who obtains employment at a mine where safety-lamps are used, if unacquainted with their uses, should be taught and have them explained to him. There are miners who have been working at mines where no safety-lamps are used, but who are practical miners in every other respect, and they should be taught the use of the lamp. Down our way, and I believe it is the same at other mines, men come and go. Men come on to do trucking who have never been in a mine before in their lives, and when they are intrusted with a safety-lamp they should certainly know something about it, because the lives of others are dependent upon the way they use their lamps. With regard to clause 11, I might state that we have time and a half for Sunday work if any is done on Sunday, but we see no reason why we should not get double time. We recognise that it is worth double payment just as much as the time of a dredgeman. At the same time we do not want Sunday work, although it is inevitable that a certain amount should be done. We would rather be without it, but if we have to work we consider that double time should be paid. With regard to overtime, time and a quarter is paid for work done during the week. With regard to clause 13, I believe that to be a step in the right direction. The fact of check

inspectors visiting the mines should certainly do away with the necessity for more Inspectors being employed by the Department. I have no fault to find with the inspection, but if the mines could be inspected more frequently it would be better. A check inspector going round a mine would take upon himself a considerable amount of responsibility, and the fact that a mine was reported by the men's inspector to be all right and all that sort of thing would be a great help to the Department, and I think the men's inspectors ought to be paid by the Department. Clause 15 (hours of labour): At present this is subject to an agreement or award in force, and I would like to point out how it has worked in our case. Some time prior to the Arbitration Court hearing the disputes on the West Coast, we met a certain company in conference, and this was agreed to at once—eight hours from bank to bank. We disagreed on two or three clauses in the reference, and it was hung up. We were always writing backwards and forwards in connection with these things, and then the Court sat at Westport and decided not to give any award, and consequently the eight hours and a half had to remain in force. The consequence was that when we met the employers again and came to the question of hours of labour, after the Court had sat on the West Coast, they said they could not entertain the question of eight hours from bank to bank. The question of wages and hours had been settled before at the previous conference and everything else with the exception of the weighing of coal, length of screen, and one or two other trivial matters, and yet immediately after the Court gave its decision the employers told us they could not agree to what had previously been settled. On the east coast of the South Island we have of course, several mines working eight hours from bank to bank—the whole of the mines in Central Otago, at Manuherikia, Clyde, and Bannockburn and Cromwell, in the Milton District, at Lovell's Flat and the Bruce Colliery, and at Nightcaps, and we ask that it should be made eight hours from bank to bank in every mine, and be made subject to nothing. With regard to clause 16, this has given us considerable thought. We contend that in a section where gas is found, if it is connected by means of drives or air-courses, only safety-lamps should be used all through the mine. I think that is all I have to say in reference to the suggestions.

183. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Do you consider there would be any objection on the part of miners to the use of safety-lamps?—Yes; some of them would object.

184. Your executive think, notwithstanding that objection, that it should be made compulsory to use safety-lamps wherever there is any gas at all in the mine?—I want to make that clear—where the gas in one section may possibly affect another section.

185. That is where there is danger to one section from one that is gassy?—Yes.

186. Who should decide that, in your opinion?—I believe the workmen working there would have a very good idea.

187. Supposing there is a mine where there is gas in one part, and there is another part which is not affected by the gassy part: who is to decide whether the second part is gassy or not?—That would be a matter for inquiry, I should think.

188. By whom?—By the Department and the miners' representative.

189. What about the mine-manager; what has he got to do with it?—Well, on a question of that kind, I think there should be some one even above the mine-manager.

190. Do you suggest the Inspector?—Yes.

191. Then it comes to this, that if in the opinion of the Inspector one part of a mine is likely to be affected—although not gassy itself, but is in the neighbourhood of a part that is gassy—the workmen's inspector should have power to direct the manager to use only safety-lamps in that portion?—Yes. I would go further and say that if the manager should disagree with him there should be an inquiry made by the men's representative and the Inspector.

192. You say that if the management disagrees?—If there was a disagreement between the parties.

193. What parties?—If, in the opinion of the miners' representative it was necessary, and the management disagreed with him, I say there ought to be an inquiry, and the matter should be gone into to see if there was any possible chance of danger. If there was no possible chance of danger, then, of course, no alteration would be made.

194. The miner has now absolute freedom in representing any difficulty or possible danger to the Inspector?—Yes.

195. If he communicates with the Inspector and the Inspector thinks that only safety-lamps should be used in such places, and the management disagrees with the Inspector, you suggest that there should be an inquiry?—Yes. With regard to the individual miner, he is very loth to take action himself.

196. Well, he has the Inspector to do so?—Yes; the Inspector takes an unbiassed view and represents both sides; but if in the opinion of the men's representatives there is danger we think there should be some inquiry into it.

197. Is there any difficulty in getting the miners to obey the rules and regulations with regard to safety-lamps?—Not that I am aware of, except this, that strangers sometimes are taken out in a mine and are very careless with regard to the lamps—in fact, they do not know how to use them.

198. What means do you suggest to insure them knowing how to use the lamps. Regulation 58 does not seem to go far enough?—I think it should be made mandatory on the part of the management to see that every man does know, and if he does not know, to instruct him.

199. Can you suggest any means of improving the condition of things which now exists? Sometimes even a well-instructed man—a miner who knows how to use his safety-lamp—gets careless in using it: can you suggest any remedy?—I cannot say positively that it exists, but we have found that men have been punished for the breaking of a lamp-glass. I believe it is in some cases unavoidable, but at the same time the men have been punished.

200. Do you think it necessary that there should be very strict rules on this subject which should be enforced?—Yes.

201. With regard to Sunday labour, what kind of labour do you refer to?—All labour.

202. You are aware that some kinds of labour, such as pumping, have to go on every day, Sunday included?—Yes.

203. Do you suggest that absolutely necessary work like that which has been carried on for years should be paid for at double rates?—Yes.

204. How do you justify it?—From the fact that the man has to work. Sunday is his day of rest.

205. Supposing he gets another day of rest: do you not think it very likely to lead to more inconvenience to the miner himself in this way, that in all probability the manager would so arrange as to keep the men pumping until 12 o'clock on Saturday night, and bring them back after 12 o'clock on Monday morning?—That would be preferable to Sunday work.

206. Do you think the men would think so?—Yes.

207. You think that if it is necessary to keep the pump going all the time the men should get double pay?—Yes.

208. Do you think this is a matter for the Arbitration Court or for the statutory law?—With regard to the first part of the clause it should come under the Court, and in regard to the other it should come under the Coal-mines Act. I do not believe in leaving it to the Court.

209. Do you believe in the Arbitration Court?—I do, if it is properly constituted.

210. Do you think all hours of work should be fixed by law and only the settlement of wages be left to the Court?—Speaking particularly of mining and confining myself to that, I think the maximum hours of labour should be fixed by Parliament.

211. Do you think the shift wages in any industry are dependent to a large extent on the hours of labour?—You are getting into a big question now. That would depend upon the number of shift hands employed.

212. Take one man on shift-work: Do you think his wages would depend upon the number of hours he worked, assuming that he was an ordinarily competent man?—I would say that if he only worked six hours when eight hours were the shift, he would, of course, be paid in proportion.

213. Are the miners as a rule ready to accept a wage in proportion if their hours are reduced?—I have had that question before me before, and I say this: That we are asking for eight hours, and as regards the wages part of it we will take our chance of what we can get.

214. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Mr. Allen asked you if you thought the men's wages should depend upon the hours they worked: What was your reply?—That we wanted the eight hours from bank to bank, and that as to the matter of wages we are prepared to stand our chance of them.

215. Do you not think that wages are regulated to a large extent by the nature of the employment?—No doubt.

216. Take a diver, for instance, and many other occupations?—No doubt, but I am speaking of miners.

217. And you are considering the nature of their employment?—That is so.

218. Do you admit that the wages of coal-miners should be regulated in an ordinary way by other employment?—No; you can hardly do that. It stands out by itself.

219. Why?—By the nature of the employment and the risk.

220. By the dangerous nature of the employment—that is what you rest upon?—Yes.

221. Coming back to the safety-lamp: Mr. Allen said that a miner can represent anything to an Inspector?—Yes, with regard to anything wrong.

222. Supposing an Inspector is not available to report it to: Mr. Newton told us that gas was reported at Tyneside and was not reported in the book?—Yes.

223. Do you think the system of inspection is perfect?—We have no fault to find with the inspection except that it should be done oftener.

224. Do you think the present inspection of coal-mines is perfect or imperfect?—I do not know how to answer your question.

225. Is there perfect inspection all the time in every coal-mine?—My reply is that there ought to be more frequent inspection.

226. How often should the Government Inspector examine the Kaitangata Mine?—I should say that no greater period should elapse than a month between the inspections.

227. Going back to the safety-lamps: Mr. Allen asked you about safety-lamps being used in the gassy section of a mine. If there is gas at all, is there not a chance of the gas travelling from one section to another very quickly?—There is, according to theory, at all events, and some say there has been a practical demonstration of it. When a mine is fired by gas, any accumulation of dust helps it, and it would probably travel to a great distance.

228. That is, in an explosion. I mean the gas itself?—Gas will travel to where there are airways.

229. If there is any gas at all, do you think that safety-lamps should be used?—If there are any sections in the mine.

230. If there is any gas in a mine at all, do you think that mine should be worked with safety-lamps?—Yes.

231. In every part of it?—Yes, in every part where there is any danger of it affecting any other part.

232. You recommend that all men working in a gassy mine should be examined in the use of the safety-lamp?—Yes.

233. Would that be any hardship to the men, that they should undergo an examination?—No.

234. Would it be very hard on the management, or any one else, to have this made a legal examination?—I think a very few minutes would suffice to instruct the men in the use of the safety-lamp on the part of the manager.

235. In reference to another phase of safety in regard to men's lives in a mine: Do you think that all men should undergo an examination in the working of coal?—I think all men should go through an examination as to their knowledge of the safety-lamp.

236. I mean with regard to timbering and doing their work systematically and profitably?—Every man has to put up his timber to the satisfaction of the management.

237. Should the miner be experienced in the use of explosives?—Yes.

238. Do the lives of other men in the mine depend upon his knowledge of explosives?—Yes, to a certain extent.

239. Do you think the miner should pass an examination in the methods of getting coal?—The method of coal-getting varies in almost every mine. A method can be in vogue in Westport in regard to the holing and cutting of coal, but when you get to Kaitangata you find they probably have a different method altogether. It may be desirable to hole on the top, or nick on the top.

240. There are two or more men working in some of these places?—There are sometimes single places.

241. But generally there are two. Do not the lives of these men depend upon the method of getting the coal?—We have a provision for that, that they should not go on coal under two years' experience.

242. But you have no examination?—No; I would favour that.

243. You would favour the proposal that before a man should go on the coal he should undergo an examination?—Yes.

244. Is it not a fact that men are put on the coal who know very little about coal-getting?—I understand there have been instances where men have said they were miners, and they have been put on the coal simply because the manager took their word for it.

245. You are not aware whether the managers examine them first?—I am not aware of that.

246. Do you think they should be examined?—Yes, I do. In fact, I examine them myself when they come to me. I very soon put them through a test.

247. Go back to clause 2, in reference to the Inspector visiting the scene of an accident as soon as possible. Is it possible for the Inspector in many cases now to visit a place for a fortnight or three weeks after an accident has occurred?—I have never known where they have been that long in visiting the scene of an accident. A couple of days is the longest I have known.

248. That is in Otago?—Yes.

249. You know the West Coast?—Yes.

250. Supposing Mr. Tennent happened to be down at Okarito, and an accident occurred at Puponga, how long would it take him to get to Puponga in ordinary weather?—I should say that, sailing, and not having to wait for coaches, three days would be the shortest time.

251. Supposing he was going straight from Okarito?—He might reach Ross in one day. I do not know exactly how the boats or coaches are running.

252. Supposing he did it in a week, would it be good work?—I could not tell you. I believe it is an out-of-the-way place.

253. Coming to clause 3, the payment of wages at the mine's mouth: Would that be a hardship on the mine-owners of New Zealand?—I do not see that there would be any hardship in it. Perhaps the company might fear getting robbed when taking the money up the hill; as regards Denniston they take the money up the hill.

254. Do you know the system of payment of wages in other employment: do you know that the law is that wages must be paid on the work?—I did not know that. Possibly it might be contended that they were on the work where they were paid three miles from the mine-mouth.

255. Your contention is that every man should be paid his wages as near as convenient to the place where he earns them?—That is so.

256. Coming to the question of explosives, there is a list of these now?—Yes.

257. Are there any explosives on that list that the miners object to?—I do not know of anything down our way. At the same time I support the proposal, and consider there should be an examination and report made by the men as to their effect on the men's health.

258. Supposing the miners had a right to select any explosives on that list, would that satisfy you?—You would have a diversity of opinion.

259. If an explosive were not healthy it could then be struck off the list?—Yes. The companies find all the explosives.

260. Do you think that would be a remedy—that if there are explosives that the miners are not satisfied with, they could just strike them off the list?—The main thing is the health point of view, and you would have a diversity of opinion from the workmen themselves. Some of them would think that one explosive was better for blasting purposes and they would not look at the matter from a health point of view. It would be better if you had expert men who understood the effects the fumes would have on the men's health.

261. If you decided on which were the best and allowed nothing but what was best to pass the Government Inspector, do you think that would be a remedy for this grievance? Say you got a committee of experts to decide on the list?—Yes.

262. With regard to the wages-sheet and supplying duplicates of the men's pay-sheets, what have you to say to that?—I understood the suggestion was that periodical duplicates of pay-sheets should be supplied to the workmen's union.

263. Would that involve any large extent of extra clerical labour on the part of the employers?—It would depend upon the number employed.

264. What is the value of the ticket?—It is very small indeed.

265. How much per man do you think it would take to make a duplicate of the pay-sheets?—I do not think it would cost 3d. for fifty men.

266. Well, supposing it cost 2s. 6d. or 5s. ?—It would not.

267. Do you think a duplicate of the fortnightly pay-sheet would do instead ?—That would be better even. You would not need the pay-sheets then.

268. Take clause 8, about lamp-tester : You say that every miner tests his own safety-lamp ?—Yes.

269. Do you think that is advisable ?—He has to satisfy himself under the present Act. The trouble is that though he looks at his lamp and finds it is securely locked, though he looks to see if he can discern any crack, and although the lamp may pass the test from the air point of view—that is, the blowing—there is a doubt then as to whether the lamp is correct.

270. You have already said that every miner should undergo an examination in the safety-lamp, and you have not got that yet. Under the existing condition do you think every miner is trustworthy and knows enough about it ?—I think they are all right with the exception of new hands just starting. I think the old hands know all about it.

271. Supposing they do understand it, do you think every man is reliable enough to be intrusted with a safety-lamp ?—Yes, or he ought not to be there.

272. Do you not think it would be better if some one who did know tested it ?—They do now, but there is no test.

273. Supposing you got a tester, would you allow every man to test his own lamp without the aid of a fireman ?—No ; the lamp is tested by the fireman, and then the miner can test his own lamp as well, to test the accuracy of the fireman.

274. At the same instrument ?—Yes. There is a man for the purpose now, so far as it goes.

275. Coming to furnaces, you referred to one explosion and said there was no sign of the explosion within 40 yards of the furnace, but considerable indication of it up to 400 yards away ?—Yes.

276. What do you think was the cause of the explosion ?—My impression is that the gas was either lit at that furnace or at a fire on the way. Preferably I should say it was lit at the furnace. In my opinion it went from the furnace.

277. How far from the furnace was the indication of the centre of the explosion ?—I understood 30 or 40 yards, and the centre was 400 or 500 yards.

278. Your contention is that ventilation by means of a furnace should not be allowed ?—That is so—where gas is present at all events.

279. With regard to clause 10, in connection with the shift-boss, firemen, and deputies, passing an examination, who do you think should examine them ?—The Inspector of Mines.

280. By himself ?—Yes.

281. You would not set up a Board like the Board which grants certificates to the mine-managers ?—That would be a very costly affair.

282. Do you think all the Inspectors of Mines are qualified to become examiners ?—Well, they are not qualified for the position if they cannot examine a shift-boss. There is one I know personally, and I think he is thoroughly qualified.

283. Is that the only one whose qualifications you know anything about ?—Yes.

284. Coming to Sunday work, you say that the men should be paid double time for that ?—Yes.

285. Is there much Sunday work in the mines so far as you know ?—There is a good bit at Kaitangata.

286. Could most of that work be done equally well on week-days ?—No ; the men employed on Sunday are there as a necessary safeguard, looking after fires.

287. Have they to be there in any case all the year round, day and night ?—Yes. They take it turn and turn about.

288. There is always somebody there ?—Yes.

289. But for the working of the mine ordinarily, is there much of the work that can be done before 12 o'clock on the Saturday night or after 12 o'clock on Monday morning ?—There is very little work done there on Sunday, and, as far as I know, no work done on a Sunday could be done during the week.

290. Then the extra pay would not be a very expensive item ?—It would only be a matter of three or four men who come on.

291. Do they do any other work during the week ?—Yes.

292. This is an extra shift then ?—Yes, for the safeguard of the mine.

293. Take clause 13, with regard to the check inspectors being paid by the Government : By whom should they be appointed ?—By the miners.

294. Do you consider that those men should be paid for that work and do any other work ?—Yes.

295. Do you think that in any mine employing fifty and upwards, these men should be sufficiently paid to look after the mine ?—I think that would be too costly.

296. How much do you think they should be paid ? Just a little extra ? And should they do their ordinary work all the same ?—They should be paid for the time lost in attending to this duty.

297. Would the Inspector be under the influence of the management if he was working in the mine ?—He might be, but I should not be. I should do my duty. I am assuming that the man is straight.

298. Assuming you were appointed and was working in the mine, do you think the management would be likely to bring any influence to bear on you as to your reports ?—I could not say.

299. What is your opinion ?—The union would appoint the inspector.

300. But he would be working for his employers ?—Not necessarily.

301. You think the Department should pay him a certain amount for his services?—Yes.

302. Coming to the bank-to-bank clause, you say a company granted this until the Arbitration Court sat at Westport, and then refused it?—Yes.

303. And you think that provision should be made by Act of Parliament without reference to the Arbitration Court?—Yes.

304. Is that the general wish of the coal-miners throughout the colony?—It is the general wish our way.

305. Were you one of the delegates of the Trades and Labour Council?—No.

306. In some cases there are a number of young people put into a mine to work—trucking for a time, and in some cases not trucking at all?—Yes.

307. Do you think many of these young lads are qualified to work on the coal, or do you consider it is safe?—They are not permitted to go on the coal.

308. How do you debar them?—They have to be over the age of eighteen, and to have had two years' experience in a mine.

309. What doing?—Trucking, and that sort of thing.

310. Supposing a man is driving a horse in a mine for two years, would he be qualified to be put on to coal?—Yes, but not by himself. He would be put on with some one who watched and guarded him.

311. Do you think that is a sufficient margin of safety with regard to the men and himself?—The point is whether he would have a knowledge of the safety-lamp, and that would be the main point in having another man to watch over him. You must make your miners somehow, and that is one way.

312. You are quite satisfied that a man driving a horse for two years in a mine could be made a miner: He would be what you call an improver?—Yes.

313. *The Chairman.*] Is it not the usual thing for these youths to be put on the coal along with a collier to learn coal-getting?—Yes, at the age I mentioned.

314. Do you not think that is the proper way to make coal-miners?—Yes.

315. You think it is necessary that these youths should be trained in the mine?—I think they make better workmen.

316. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Mr. Newton told us yesterday that what you wanted was to keep a current of air going round the pillars, but not through the portion of the mine that had been entirely worked out. What is your opinion?—I think a certain amount of air should go through all the old workings right up to the fall.

317. And practically sealed off?—You cannot seal them off altogether. You must have an opening for your air. There is a great difficulty in getting these places properly sealed off. They have all kinds of stoppings, but I do not think anything has yet been found completely effective, and that being so there is a danger from the accumulation of gas in these workings. It would be better for the air travelling through to remove it. A perfectly worked out section would fall in case of an explosion. It would depend upon the magnitude of the fall and the pressure of the gas.

318. But do you think that would be likely to force an explosion?—Yes; if naked lights were about.

319. In a section of the mine completely sealed off and made gas-tight—supposing it was acting as a gasometer and had considerable pressure of gas—do you think a fall from the roof would cause an explosion?—I cannot say as to that.

320. What do you find to be the general impression about a fall creating an explosion in a sealed-off section of a mine?—I have not heard that talked of in the sense you put it.

321. If there is any danger of that there is no use in passing a current of air through?—I do not think it is possible to effectively seal these places off.

Mr. Foster: With the permission of the Committee I would like to qualify what I stated with regard to the inspectors. As far as the inspectors go under the present Act there are two appointed. The miners have power to appoint either inside or outside of the mine, and those two inspectors cost our union £1 4s. a month—one day's work each per month. That is what we suggest they should be paid by the Government. That is for the day's work they lose whenever they go round the mine inspecting.

322. *Mr. Smith (to Mr. Hollows).*] You were present yesterday when the other witnesses were examined?—Yes.

323. And your evidence tallies with theirs?—Yes, practically.

324. The point you wish to bring forward is that no boys under fourteen years of age should be employed in the mine?—Yes.

325. That all mines should be ventilated by means of a fan?—Yes.

326. That you should have legislation providing for eight hours' work from bank to bank, and that it should be compulsory to use safety-lamps where there is gas?—Yes.

327. Then there is the matter of explosives and inspection by competent authorities. Are you aware how they deal with the safety-lamps in the coal-mines in England?—Not from actual experience.

328. If a miner had to test his own lamp every morning it would take too much time?—When I said I did not know from actual experience, I ought to have said that I did work in the coal-mines in the Old Country as a boy and the same rule applied there as applies here—that a man must examine his own lamp when he gets it from the lamp-man.

329. When a boy goes into a mine does he not go from one mining operation to another and, after he has gone through the various grades, he is not put on the coal until he is competent?—Yes; that is the system in most places.

330. Leaving out the question of superannuation, I have stated all that you require?—We have not gone into the question of superannuation, nor of the accident fund.

331. You prefer the Legislature to deal with the eight-hours-from-bank-to-bank question instead of having it dealt with by the Arbitration Court?—Most certainly.

332. You have not given us any reason why the Arbitration Court refused to recognise the eight hours?—It was thought that the reason given by the Court was that the industry would not stand it. We were rather surprised when shortly afterwards one of the mining companies reduced the price of their coal by 7s. a ton in Dunedin, so that if they are making a profit now what profit did they make at the time the Court was sitting?—It must have been enormous.

333. *Mr. Herries.*] For whom are you speaking?—The Otago coal-miners.

334. Are you aware whether the coal-mines in the North Island have any sympathy with these requisitions, have they been consulted at all?—That would be a matter for the representative of the Trades and Labour Council here to answer.

335. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] Are the sanitary arrangements in the Otago District satisfactory to the miners?—I have heard no complaints in that direction.

336. What is your opinion with reference to what you may have heard?—I think we should have the fans in use.

337. Are the arrangements then satisfactory?—I think they would be all right. I may say that there have been complaints that have been attended to, and things are now very satisfactory.

338. Do you believe the Government inspection to be adequate and satisfactory?—I believe the Inspectors make a thorough inspection when they do inspect.

339. You are aware, I suppose, that there have been cases of prosecution through breaches of the regulations?—Yes.

340. And in every case where there has been a breach of the regulations you know that the Inspectors took proceedings if the breaches were not at once attended to?—When they are satisfied that there has been a breach I believe they take action at once.

341. *Mr. Allen.*] There is one question about sealing off that I would like to put: You are aware, of course, that certain mines have worked-out areas and fires exist. Do you suggest that it would be right to allow any air-current to get there?—Oh, no; not when there are fires.

THOMAS CAIRNS examined. (No. 6.)

342. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A coal-miner representing the Otago Coal-miners' Industrial Union of Workers.

343. Are you prepared to give evidence on the suggestions made in connection with the Bill before the Committee?—Yes. Seeing that the other witnesses have dealt so fully with the matter I will go over it as quickly as I can. I need only say that I concur with the evidence given by the previous witnesses in regard to the first two clauses. With respect to clause 3, it does not apply to any mine in our district, but it does to other parts of the colony, and we consider it our duty to support the clause with regard to the payment of wages at the mine-mouth. We are entirely in accord with clause 4 in reference to the supply of the best explosives, and that they should be certified to as the best from a health point of view. In reference to clause 5, in connection with the Accident Relief Fund being available in cases of death through sickness, I consider this to be a step in the right direction. I express no opinion as to clause 6, dealing with the Superannuation Fund, for the benefit of all coal-miners. With regard to clause 7, that miners' unions be empowered to take extracts from time-books and wages-sheets, I concur with that. I think clause 8, with regard to safety-lamps, is highly necessary, and that we should strive to get that placed on the statute-book. I believe in the principle of clause 9, that fans be employed at all times where artificial ventilation is, in the opinion of the Inspector of Mines or that of the workmen's inspectors, required. Clause 10, dealing with the examination of a shift-boss, &c.: I think that is very necessary. I also approve of clause 11, with regard to Sunday work being paid for at double rates. I am not altogether in favour of clause 12, that 2½ per cent. be allowed from the Coal-miners' Accident Relief Fund for the purpose of management. I would suggest that if the Government provided the stationery and the necessary books, it would meet the case. With regard to clause 13, in reference to check inspectors, I believe the men's inspector ought to have more power than he has at the present time. I approve of the suggestion that the hours of labour should be not more than eight from surface to surface in any one shift. These are the suggestions as printed, and I approve of them the same as the other witnesses have done.

344. *Mr. J. Allen.*] What is the Accident Fund used for? Only for accidents?—Yes.

345. You are aware that the Workers' Compensation Act now provides for accidents?—Yes.

346. Would you be in favour of the money now being paid into the Accident Fund being devoted to a Sick Fund—would you like to make the change?—Personally I should like to see it made into a Sick Fund also.

347. And let the Workers' Compensation Act meet the other case?—Yes.

348. Are you satisfied with the inspection of mines at present?—I do not know that I have any complaints to make with regard to the inspection, providing it is supplemented.

349. But are you satisfied with the present inspection?—Nothing has come under my observation to complain of.

350. Does the Inspector in Otago do the Southland and Canterbury inspection as well?—I believe he has the whole of the coal-mines on the east coast of the South Island to inspect, and as far as I know the dredges also. He has an assistant of course.

351. *Mr. Bennett.*] You have two inspectors?—Yes an inspector and an assistant.

JOHN FOSTER recalled. (No. 7.)

352. *The Chairman.*] You wish to supplement your evidence?—Yes. Members of the Committee seem to be a little bit astray in their ideas as to the reduction of wages in connection with the Arbitration Court. I would just like to say that in our opinion the position laid down in the report in the *Labour Journal* is not quite correct. In 1895 we were paid 2s. 10d. a ton for hewing at Denniston Hill, and the rate was reduced to 2s. 4d. per ton. We have worked at 2s. 4d. per ton since, and our average wages at the present day are equal to what they were when we got 2s. 10d. a ton. We are producing more coal per man than we did previously to make up the difference between 2s. 4d. per ton and 2s. 10d. per ton, and our wages at the present time are as high per man at 2s. 4d. as they were when we were getting 2s. 10d. per ton. We further maintain that there is only a certain amount of work in a man, and seven hours is enough for any man in a mine, and that our average will be as good with the reduced hours, because a man cannot work himself like a machine from morning till night for eight hours.

353. *Mr. Bannet.*] What are the average wages?—On Denniston Hill at the present time from about 11s. 6d. to 15s. : 11s. 6d. would be the rate in the solid workings.

354. *Mr. Herries.*] Have you any machine for cutting the coal?—Yes, for some of it, but they employ day-labour for that. What we call the big pillars is where the men cannot get any roof, which is about 30 ft. high. They make about 15s. a day there. At any rate, the wages are as good now as they were before, and we have half an hour less work.

355. *Mr. J. Allen.*] I understand you to say that the wages are as good now as they were some time ago when you were getting 2s. 10d. a ton for hewing, whereas now you only get 2s. 4d.?—Yes, that is quite correct.

356. Do you wish the Committee to infer that if your wages are reduced they would be as good with shorter hours?—No. What I meant to infer is this, that the Court had no reason to make the remark that we should have our wages lowered because we should work fewer hours.

357. You said that working for 2s. 4d. per ton, instead of 2s. 10d., and with shorter hours your wages were as good as they were before?—Yes.

358. Now, if the wages are reduced from 2s. 4d. to 2s. and the hours are reduced another half-hour, would your average wages be the same?—No.

359. You have got to the limit then?—We have to find that out. What I am speaking of are facts.

360. What I want to know is, how far you can carry the principle out?—I would like to state that I do not know anything in history or statistics which shows that by working shorter hours it has reduced wages or lessened production. If we take Durham, as was mentioned by one of the witnesses, we shall find that production there per man is the best in England, and yet the men only work six hours a shift.

361. You do not state that as a general principle, with no limitation?—They work fewer hours, and their production is greater than it is in any part of England.

362. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] You know the reasons given by the Arbitration Court for refusing to make an award?—We were told distinctly that the companies would have to close down their mines, but we knew perfectly well that they would not have to do so.

363. Will you read that please [*Journal of Department of Labour* for April, 1905, handed to witness]? Read paragraph 2 of the Court's summing up, page 272?—"To curtail the hours of men working in mines on tonnage rates or fixed wages would materially reduce the earning-power of the men, unless the rates were correspondingly increased."

364. What is your answer to that?—My answer is that they cannot prove it unless it is tried. I have gone so far as to say that with the reduction of 6d. per ton we have still held up our wages and produced as much as before, and until we try it we do not know whether there will be any reduction in the manner stated.

365. Will you read the next paragraph?—"3. So to increase the rates would not merely result in reversing the previous action of the Court without adequate proof of grounds, but it would operate with such absolute inequality in different mines and parts of mines as greatly to increase the difficulties of employers without any corresponding advantage to the men."

366. What do you think of that?—I say the Court cannot prove that.

367. The Court says there would be no corresponding advantage to the men from giving the eight hours from bank to bank?—Well, I am of opinion that when the reduced hours come about our production will be equal to what it is now.

368. Will it be an advantage?—It will be an advantage to the men.

369. You disagree with the findings of the Court?—Yes, we disagree. What we contend is that the Court should have given us the shorter hours and the old award back again, as everything would find its own level.

370. Read paragraph No. 4?—"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."

371. What do you say to that?—In my opinion, on Denniston Hill, it would not have made any difference at all in the production.

372. Your production would have been equal to what it was before?—Yes. The only difference would be that, supposing the men could not produce the same amount of coal in the shorter hours, the company would have had to put more men on. The company now is doing its work in about six and a half hours per day, or six and a quarter. That is what it takes to haul the coal over the hill in this mine, and if there was any difference they could put more men on to supply the rope.

373. The Court says that they could not make an award on this question without reversing the previous finding of the Court. Was the law altered to give eight hours from bank to bank after that award was made?—Yes.

374. The law was altered between their previous award and the last sitting of the Court?—That is so.

375. Would not the alteration in the law have justified them in altering their previous award?—Certainly.

376. If they had carried out the law they would have reversed their previous findings?—Yes.

377. Now take No. 5: “That there is every reason to fear that to materially increase the cost of production would, in some cases at least, result in the closing of the mine, with the inevitable consequence of reducing the number of men employed on the West Coast, and thereby prejudicially affecting the general prosperity of the industrial district.” Do you know any coal-mines on the West Coast that the adoption of the eight hours from bank to bank would be the means of closing?—No.

378. The Court says that to put the law into force would mean the closing of some of the mines on the West Coast?—That would be impossible.

379. Do you think all the mines would be able to bear the strain financially if this law were put into force?—I am sure they would.

380. You are satisfied that the Westport Coal Company would?—Yes.

381. Have you seen a copy of the Westport Coal Company's balance-sheet in the newspapers?—Yes.

382. Is that a copy of the balance-sheets for the past four years [document shown to witness]?—Yes, I believe that is a copy of the balance-sheets. I am satisfied it would be no hardship to the Westport Coal Company.

383. This is an extract taken from the balance-sheets of the Westport Coal Company, which appears in the *Westport Times* of the 14th August, 1905:—“Extracts from the Westport Coal Company's balance-sheets for years 1901, 1902, 1903, and 1904: Paid-up capital, £280,000. Dividends declared and bonuses paid, £141,000; debentures paid off, £65,000; added to reserve, £55,000; Accident Insurance Fund, £48,047; sinking fund, £5,000; carried forward, £9,482: total profit, £324,359, made in four years. There is apparently a large amount of development-work also done that probably appears to be paid out of revenue.” So that you can take the net profits of the Westport Coal Company at about £100,000, and still the Arbitration Court finds that the industry would not stand the strain of eight hours from bank to bank?—Yes. There are two Government mines working the eight hours, and the Tyneside Mine is working the eight hours from bank to bank.

384. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Are the Government mines paying?—I should say so. The Brunner Mine is working eight hours from bank to bank.

385. *Mr. E. McKenzie.*] Do you consider the present system of inspection a perfect system?—Some time ago, when I was up here, we had some complaints to make about the Inspector.

386. You do not say anything about the Inspector now, but do you think the system is a perfect one?—I think the mines should be inspected oftener by the Government Inspector.

387. How often?—Once a month. My contention is this: that unless an Inspector—more especially where the pillars are being extracted—is in touch with the workmen it is impossible for him to know whether the coal is extracted or buried, and at present he is not in the mine sometimes for three months.

388. I wanted to know about the ventilation and sanitation of the mines?—The ventilation is very good indeed with us. I never saw a mine that was better. Every precaution is taken.

389. And still you think they ought to be inspected once a month?—Yes.

390. I am not taking Denniston or Granity specially, but the mines generally?—Yes, that is so. We think that if the two check inspectors were taken up by the Government, and they were paid for their inspection, they could go fearlessly to work and put their reports into the check inspector's book, which would facilitate matters.

391. *Mr. Bennet.*] You stated that the men were hewing as much coal now with seven and a half hours' labour as they did when they worked eight hours?—Yes.

392. If the men were on day-labour and were getting the same rate of pay while working half an hour less, do you consider they would give the same return for the money?—With regard to hewers, that is another question. A man working piecework is working for himself, and I am speaking of pieceworkers.

393. It would have to apply to all, would it not—both those at piecework and on day-labour?—It should apply to all, but I am speaking now of pieceworkers and the way they are doing it. There is one thing I do know, and that is that we have a lot of fillers down there and their output is as good as it was before the half-hour reduction came into force, and they are working on day wages.

394. *Mr. Herries.*] Were you present at the Arbitration Court referred to?—Yes.

395. Was evidence taken?—Yes.

396. Was evidence taken with regard to what you have been speaking about just now, as to whether people could do as much work in fewer hours?—Yes, we had it in black and white to show it.

397. All this evidence was before the Court?—Yes.

398. And I suppose the mine-owners put in evidence as a set-off?—Yes. I might state that the men have felt that they should only work one shift. There was a large percentage put on the second and third shifts, and this I believe has been the cause of the remarks of the Court, the second and third shifts showing such a large percentage, and evidence was brought to show that it was an enormous thing. But it was the same as Sunday work—we did not want it, we only wanted one shift, and it was the two other shifts which showed the large percentage.

399. The decision of the Court was not arrived at because there was no evidence brought before it—they took this into consideration?—Yes; all the men's time and pay-sheets we could get hold of were placed before the Court.

400. You do not complain about the Court shutting out evidence—it took all the evidence that was tendered to it?—Yes, on both sides.

401. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Has there been any increase in the cost of living at Denniston as compared with about ten years ago, when you got 2s. 10d. a ton?—There is a difference of from 15 to 20 per cent. It is higher.

402. *Mr. W. Fraser.*] You said just now that if the extra half-hour desired to be obtained under the bank-to-bank system was enforced, and the quantity of coal extracted proved to be less, the company could remedy that by putting on more men?—That is so.

403. What mines are you speaking about?—Denniston and other mines.

404. Do you know the circumstances of the other mines in the colony?—I do not.

405. Can you conceive it possible that there might be some mines in the colony where more hands could not be put on?—But there should be places in a mine where they could be put on.

406. Do you think an extra number of men could be put on to make up for the diminished output consequent on the half-year's less work?—Yes, if it so happened; but there might be one or two places where they could not.

407. In those particular mines where they could not be put on, if it were made imperative by law that the bank-to-bank principle should be established, would there not be a loss?—There would be a loss to the employer to a certain extent.

408. The circumstances in regard to every mine in the colony would not be the same?—Certainly not, but that difficulty can be got over at any time. There are plenty of places in England at the present time working under the same system; that is, one man goes in at 8 o'clock and another goes in at 10 o'clock, and consequently the rope is running for the full eight hours, and still the men work only six hours. The haulage gear is running for eight hours. At Denniston, where I am working, we have got what we call the Coalbrookdale Mine and the Iron-bridge Mine, and if they have not got the time or spare places all they have to do is to start one shift at 8 o'clock and that will knock off at 4 o'clock. The other shift starts an hour later, so that the two are criss-crossing or overhauling at is were. The rope could work the full eight hours, and the men would work the eight hours from bank to bank. One shift would go in an hour before the other.

409. Are the two mines at Denniston connected?—They are on the same haulage-rope. It is the same with any single mine: You can send half your men in half an hour or an hour before the others to suit the haulage, if you have no places.

410. That might not work in every mine?—I do not know why it should not—I do not see anything to stop it. There are a great many places in England where it is done, and it has been done on Denniston Hill for years.

411. *Mr. Herries.*] How many shifts are running?—Just the one. The only thing we want is that the Court shall be compelled to give its award, and we are quite willing to let things find their own level.

412. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Are you aware that the Court has said that if it gave an award it must do an injustice to one side or the other?—Yes; I am aware of it.

413. You think the Court should do an injustice to one side or the other rather than that no amendment of the law should be made?—I am in favour of this: that the Court should be compelled to give an award and let things find their own level. I think that is the fairest thing to be done.

414. If it should do an injustice to the men you are prepared to accept it?—I have to accept it. My instructions were to get the eight hours from bank to bank whatever happens.

415. *The Chairman.*] You said that with a man working for himself at the point of the pick, and getting so much per ton, it would make no difference. Do you think it would make any difference to the company? Do you think that if a man had to work seven and a half hours he would try to fill as much coal equally for the company as for himself?—He is doing it now. His output is equal to what it was before.

416. You feel confident that a day-labourer would work as hard for the company, if getting 10s. or 11s. a day, as if he were working for himself?—I am of opinion that he would work harder, but I would not like to say that he would put as much vigour into his work as a man working piecework. A man working at wages would try to make his output as good as it was before.

417. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Do you not think the Court could make an award that would be just to both sides, instead of one that would be an injustice to either side?—Yes.

APPENDIX.

SUGGESTIONS AND REPLIES IN CONNECTION WITH THE COAL-MINES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SUGGESTIONS.

Suggestions by Miners' Representatives in Connection with the Coal-mines Act Amendment Bill.

1. That after the word "Inspector" in the third line of clause 3 the words "and workmen's inspectors" be inserted.

2. The workmen's inspectors to be permitted to visit the scene of an accident immediately an accident occurs.

3. That in section 7, reference to payment of wages within a limit of two miles be struck out, and that where the Workers' Union, or a majority of workmen employed at the mine, so desires, payment of wages shall be made at the mine mouth.

4. That provision be made for the supply of the best explosives at cost price from the mine-owner, and that no explosive be permitted to be used in any mine unless the Inspector of Explosives has certified that it is the best from a health point of view that can be procured in the market.

5. That payment under the Coal-Miners' Accident Relief Fund be made for deaths through sickness as well as through accident, and that the fund be consolidated and converted into a Colonial Fund for the benefit of all coal-miners.

6. That provision be made for a Superannuation Fund for the benefit of all coal-miners.

7. That Miners' Unions be empowered to take extracts from time-books and wages-sheets and books.

8. That in all mines where safety-lamps are used it be made compulsory for mine-owners to provide a proper gas-tester to enable the miner to test his lamp before entering the mine.

9. That fans be at all times used where artificial ventilation is, in the opinion of the Inspector of Mines or the workmen's inspectors, required.

10. That before any person can take the position of shift-boss, fireman, or deputy in a mine, he shall have had at least five years' practical experience as a miner, and shall pass an examination by the Inspector of Mines on gases before he is allowed to carry a closed lamp to detect gas, and shall have a thorough knowledge of ventilation and timbering.

11. That all Sunday work in or about a coal-mine be paid for at the rate of double ordinary time, and that overtime be paid for at the rate of time and a quarter.

12. That 2½ per cent. be allowed from the Coal-Miners' Accident Relief Fund for the purpose of management.

13. That the check-inspectors be paid by the Mines Department whilst employed inspecting the mine.

14. That power be given to check-inspectors to have any practice or thing discontinued or done which they consider to be dangerous or injurious to the health of the workmen employed in or about a mine.

15. That the hours of labour in mines be not more than eight hours from surface to surface in any one shift.

16. That in any section of a mine where inflammable gas exists no naked lights shall be used, and, where the various sections of a mine where inflammable gas is found are connected one with the other by workings of any description, safety lamps shall be used throughout the mine.

REPLIES.

CROMWELL AND BANNOCKBURN COLLIERIES COMPANY (LIMITED), DUNEDIN.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge receipt of your circular of the 21st ultimo, through the mine-manager, Mr. Gillanders, and I now beg to submit the following remarks and references made by him *in re* the "Suggestions by Miners' Representatives in connection with the Coal-mines Acts Amendment Bill" attached to your circular:—

No. 2. No exception taken to this section.

No. 3. While fixing a reasonable distance from the mine within which distance wages should be paid is reasonable, trying to have them paid at the mine-mouth is quite unnecessary, and in our own case would be impracticable where we have several small mines.

No. 4. The first clause of this sentence is all right, but the effect of the second clause would be to prevent the use of all explosives except one (that certified as the best from a health point of view by the Inspector of Explosives), and as no one explosive combines all the qualities required by the various conditions of mining, it would be a serious handicap to be confined to one explosive.

No. 5. The adoption of this section would be to place the miners on a special footing, and would have to be met by a special tax on coal.

No. 6. No objection to a suitable superannuation scheme for coal-miners.

No. 7. Strong exception taken to so all-embracing a power being given to unions,

No. 8. No exception to this.

No. 9. The use of fans where artificial ventilation is required is desirable, but to leave the workmen's inspector the power to say when this is required is placing too much power in his hands, and there is no guarantee that such workmen's inspector would be a competent man.

No. 10. No exception to this section.

No. 11. I do not know if we could raise any strong objection to this, seeing that it is recognised in most occupations, although mining is on an exceptional footing, seeing that work that has to be done on a Sunday is generally of such a character that it could not possibly be put off without serious loss or damage to property. Much of the work done at mines on Sunday is of absolute necessity, such as pumping, &c., and the adoption of this would simply add to the cost of production.

No. 12. This seems reasonable.

No. 13. It seems as if they want to duplicate the present Government Inspectors, as by having the Mines Department pay these check inspectors (whatever they are) they become Government Inspectors.

No. 14. The exception taken to the latter clause in section 9 applies strongly to this clause, as this practically gives the management of the mines into the hands of these check inspectors, and yet no responsibility.

No. 15. This seems to me what is at present provided for.

No. 16. The latter portion of this section seems too sweeping altogether.

T. K. HARTY, Manager.

P.S.—I would respectfully point out that the same conditions ought not to apply to "brown" coal pits as against anthracite and bituminous coal-measures. The latter are subject to explosive gases, whilst the former are free from them, wherefore lignite-pits are not subject to the same catastrophies, and moreover are nearly all worked by drives, not shafts.—T.K.H.

REFERRING to mine of 5th instant, I beg to say that I inadvertently overlooked—I think it is clause 8 (I have not the circular by me), in regard to the day's work commencing from entrance to pits. This would entail a great increase of wages in some collieries where it might take some time to get to and from face or workings, and reduce day's work far below eight hours. I hear of one instance where it would mean six hours and a half, the one hour and a half being taken up in going to and from face. I submit that day's work ought to be from time locality is reached where work is going on, and to end there.

T. K. HARTY.

NORTHERN COAL COMPANY (LIMITED), AUCKLAND.

(Collieries at Waro, near Whangarei.)

WE have considered your circular containing the suggestions by miners' representatives in connection with the Coal-mines Acts Amendment Bill, and wish to record our objections to certain of the suggestions, on the following grounds:—

Suggestion No. 2.—By clause 3 of the Coal-mines Act Amendment Bill a manager is liable to have his certificate suspended or cancelled if any place where any serious accident has occurred be interfered with until examined by an Inspector of Mines. If this suggestion were complied with, and a person incompetent or otherwise is allowed to interfere, a manager may have not only his certificate cancelled, but his life sworn away.

Suggestion No. 5.—This we consider would have a tendency to make a refuge-home of a mine, where any man with a chronic disease would seek employment as a means of cheap insurance. Under the existing circumstances, colliery-owners are compelled to doubly insure their workmen—first, under the Miners' Relief Fund, and, second, under the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act. This is unreasonable, and we strongly object to the Miners' Relief Fund, and any other fund dependent upon it.

Suggestion No. 6.—This suggestion is impracticable, and would eventually mean an increase in the cost of coal.

Suggestion No. 7.—The miners already receive a pay-note clearly made out in detail, and we strongly object to this suggestion.

Suggestion No. 9.—This is against the general principle of economical mining, as, in the case of our own mines, a furnace or waterfall is adequate.

Suggestion No. 12.—We object to this on the ground that we object to the fund that is to provide the money.

Suggestion No. 13.—If the Mines Department have not a sufficient staff, it would be better to appoint more proficient and competent men than to waste the money paying the expenses of any individuals the miners wish to elect.

Suggestion No. 14.—If this were in force, colliery-owners might look to the check inspector for the management of their mines, as the mine-manager would only be a figure-head without power.

Suggestion No. 15.—If this becomes law, the miners will in many cases not work more than six hours at the face, and the surface hands will have to be paid just the same, though the mine be idle a portion of the day.

Suggestion No. 16.—When inflammable gas is found in one portion of a mine, it should not be compulsory to use safety-lamps in all parts unless a clear inspection demands it, as gas may be found in the furthest and highest parts, and may in no way interfere with other sections.

REGINALD A. AICKIN, Secretary.

INSPECTOR OF MINES (SOUTHERN DISTRICT), DUNEDIN.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge receipt of your circular letter of the 21st instant, together with "Suggestions by Miners' Representatives in connection with the Coal-mines Acts Amendment Bill" attached thereto.

In reply to your invitation to attend the meeting of your honourable Committee, I beg to say that on the 6th April last I submitted my views on questions Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, mentioned by you, to the Under-Secretary for Mines, and also attended the Conference of Wardens and Inspectors in June last, when these subjects were considered and dealt with by the Conference.

With regard to answers to suggestions Nos. 11, 14, 15, and 16, these are new considerations.

Suggestion 11 I consider one for the Arbitration Court. There has recently been a pronouncement by the Chairman of the Conciliation Board, Dunedin, as to payment of Sunday rates *in re* Allandale Mine, and, to the best of my knowledge, that pronouncement is the accepted standard for this district.

Suggestion 14.—This is a power sought to be obtained by probably uncertificated persons, acting on behalf of the men, over certificated mine-managers and duly appointed underground officials, and in my opinion should not be granted. The miners' representatives have their remedy under both Acts by reporting matters considered defective to Inspectors of Mines. It must be remembered that even the latter officials, who, it may be assumed, are properly qualified, are liable to have their decisions and requirements appealed against, how much more so then might the actions of miners' representatives be resented, especially when the uncertificated person might presume to order the certificated manager to do a thing which, in his opinion, might not be in the interests of safety of life and property.

Suggestion 15 is, I understand, regulated by the Arbitration Court.

Suggestion 16.—The case is unfairly stated. Speaking for myself, naked lights are not used where inflammable gas exists. On the other hand, fully four hundred safety-lamps are in daily use at Kaitangata mines, and we have had difficulty in maintaining their use, but the men are more reconciled now than they were. On the death of Mr. Jordan, lately manager of Kaitangata mines, his successor, Mr. Barclay, relaxed the rules as to use of safety-lamps, with the consent of, and, I believe, with the countenance of the union, but in opposition to my wishes, and it seems strange to now find this proposal laid before me. I need not say that the principle of the suggestion has my hearty support.

In conclusion, I desire to say that if your honourable Committee desires to call me I shall be only too glad to attend and impart any information that lies in my power.

E. R. GREEN,

Inspector of Mines, Dunedin.

TAUPIRI COAL-MINES (LIMITED), HUNTLY.

ON receiving the copy of the Coal-mines Amendment Bill, I called together all the certificated managers at hand, resulting in a conference of four—William Tattler, E. W. Tattler, William Morgan, and myself, all holding first-class certificates.

Respecting clause 3: We consider that suspension or cancellation of certificates should only be dealt with by a Board constituted somewhat similarly to a nautical Board of inquiry, and we suggest that a fair constitution would be two first-class certificated managers, two competent miners, and one Stipendiary Magistrate. As the amendment reads, it seems that two Justices of the Peace would have the power to cancel a certificate.

26A. In this clause the word "haulage" is evidently intended to mean "mechanical haulage," but as it reads it would cover man and horse power. We approve of travelling-ways, but think a period of twelve months should be allowed to construct the same. We also think the clause is meant to apply to the main shift of workers only. But it frequently happens that it is necessary to bring men out at irregular hours, and some provision should be made for such men to get to their work without having to stop the haulage arrangements. Some owners may not consider it advisable to construct travelling-ways, more especially in old mines, and would prefer stopping the haulage while the main shift is travelling in and out. We therefore suggest adding, "Provided the shift does not consist of more than six men, and does not constitute the main shift of workers."

As an additional rule, in section 2 of 33 of the principal Act we recommend the following: "When using explosives a man must not have a naked light within a distance of 5 ft. in a horizontal direction of the explosive when uncovered." We have had several men burned through negligence in carrying the naked light on the head while handling powder, and we think a man should hang his light up 5 ft. away before uncovering his powder-tin.

We also draw attention to Special Rule 51 in the Appendix to the principal Act, it being in direct contradiction to clause 4, section 2, subsection (j) of the amendment. It is similarly in contradiction to the Act as it stands now, clause 33 section 2 subsection (g).

We do not take any exception to the other clauses, believing them to be in the interests of the mining community generally, but, as practical men, we trust the foregoing suggestions will meet with approval.

EDWARD S. WIGHT.

WITH reference to the suggestions made by miners' representatives on Coal-mines Act Amendment Bill I report as follows:—

Clause 1 is intended, I presume, to read "clause 6" not "3," as printed. Taking, therefore, 1 and 2 together, I consider they have already got powers enough. In the event of a serious accident they always hear of it soon enough, and at such a time a manager has sufficient to engage his attention without having to waste his time acquainting so many parties. The manager should be at liberty to proceed instantly to the scene of an accident, without running the risk of being guilty of an offence against the Act.

Clause 3 does not affect us in any way.

Clause 4. Companies should not be forced into trade with their employees.

Clause 5. Since the passing of the Compensation Act contributions to the Miners' Relief Fund should be abolished. Coal companies as it is pay three-fourths of a man's wages when off work through an accident—*i.e.*, half wages under the Compensation Act and 12s. 6d. per week from the Relief Fund (the owners' contributions).

Clause 6. I do not see any objection, so long as the contributions to maintain same are made by the miners themselves only.

Clause 7. The suggestion is monstrous.

Clause 8. This is a very common custom, to which I do not see any objection.

Clause 9. I object to the words "or the workmen's inspectors," and also to compulsory fan ventilation, as very efficient ventilation can be produced by means of a furnace.

Clause 10. As the manager has the responsibility of the mine it should be left to him to select those whom he may consider competent to work under him and carry out his instructions, from the workmen's inspectors.

Clause 11. We now pay time and a half, and I contend that this should not be done for pumping and ventilating purposes. Overtime we pay time and a quarter; this should not apply to breakdowns or urgent repairs, only to men employed in getting coal or other saleable material.

Clause 12 does not affect us in any way, but I contend that all men should be entitled to benefit from the Relief Fund whether they contribute to the miners' local accident society or not; at present those who do not contribute are not paid from the Relief Fund.

Clause 13. Leave this to the Government.

Clause 14 would take all power away from the manager, and make him subservient to the workmen's inspectors.

Clause 15. The hours should be eight in the face.

Clause 16. Would be better left to the Inspectors.

EDWARD S. WIGHT, Manager.

NIGHTCAPS COAL COMPANY (LIMITED), INVERCARGILL.

Re proposed amendments by the Trades and Labour Council in the Coal-mines Act Amendment Bill, 1905: Our mine-manager at Nightcaps (forty-four miles north-west of this), Mr. John Lloyd, has mislaid your letter to me asking for evidence and our opinion on the following proposals of the above Council which are now before the House of Representatives. However, in its absence we hope to give you what is required in writing as follows, and trust that it is not absolutely necessary for us to attend in person, as both of us have enough to do—day in and day out—to look after things here, so that it would be most inconvenient for us to go to Wellington at the present time.

I may mention that Mr. Lloyd has been our mine-manager for twenty-four years, previous to which he had had ten or twelve years' experience in large collieries in Wales and Yorkshire at Home, and also for a year or so in the Kaitangata Mine in Otago, and that the writer has been managing director of this company since its inception twenty-five years ago, consequently I think you will admit that our opinions are entitled to have some weight.

Replies.

1. Your query should be in the third line of clause 6, not clause 3. Both employers and employees are under and amenable to the Inspector of Mines and to add a "workmen's inspector" is class legislation, and therefore objectionable. The employers have as much right to ask for a "masters' inspector." Both are absurd. In a case of serious accident a mine-manager has enough to do in reporting to the Minister and the Inspector; besides, the proposal is a reflection on his duties as a certificated mine-manager.

2. Most certainly not, unless he is authorised by the Inspector of Mines, who himself has no right, and properly too, to enter any mine without first apprising and getting the sanction of the mine-manager, who is responsible for any one entering any dangerous part, especially after any accident.

3. A colliery may have several mine-mouths from time to time, or may occasionally alter its mine-mouth, and if it had or did, would that be a good reason for pulling down or shifting an expensive office and strong-room or safe, with all the paraphernalia for keeping books and accounts and box cabinets for paying a large number of men? The proposal is ridiculous, and so long as the distance is reasonable, as at present, no change is necessary or workable in practice, besides, the Arbitration Court has already threshed out this point.

4. It is out of the question that the mine-owner should supply miners working on contract or task work with explosives or other colliery supplies at bare cost, and run the risk of laying in large supplies beforehand, to say nothing of many incidental charges and clerical work, which cannot be estimated to a nicety. By all means let the miner if he wishes it have a perfectly free hand in providing his own colliery supplies, so long as they are not detrimental to the working

of the mine or adversely affect the health of those working in it. The Inspector of Mines and the mine-manager are surely the best judges, along with the owner, of what is the safest and best explosives to use from a health point of view, and they are not likely to supply or allow to be supplied any other which would be detrimental to all the parties interested. This is another of these attempts to interfere with the management, control, and internal economy of a mine, of which we have all had too much experience of late years, and every proprietor and mine-manager is justified in resenting it.

5. When the Trades Council ask that payment under the Coal-miners' Accident Relief Fund be made for deaths through sickness as well as through accident, why do they not go the whole hog and ask the employer to keep his employee from the cradle to the grave, and beyond as well? What next?

6. If coal-miners wish a superannuation fund by all means let them have it, but, like others, at their own expense only.

7. Another attempt by the unions to interfere with the control of a mine. If there is any dispute between an employee and his boss as to his wages, time, &c., I have never yet known a case where the former was refused access to the time-book to satisfy himself as to the correctness or otherwise of his pay, &c., but to accede to the request of the unions would simply be monstrous. It is no business of theirs no more than it is of the man in the street. In the majority of cases the Arbitration Court fixes the wages; surely that is ample.

8. That is a *sine qua non* as far as mine-owners are concerned. What really is wanted is that the miners should be compelled to have it done, and that he must not attempt to tamper with his safety-lamp afterwards.

9. I agree with our mine-manager's answer, but to ignore the mine-manager's opinion and adopt the workmen's inspectors' could not and would not be tolerated.

10. Right in principle, but I hardly think I would put it at five years, for one man may be perfectly capable in three years, while another would not be in thirty. This is almost like an attempt to make all men's brains equal, an old dodge of the unions, and demoralising to the good worker—indeed, that is the main reason why they in many cases do not wish to join the union at all unless practically compelled to. At the same time, it is essential that the shift-boss &c., have the qualifications stated (leaving out the years), and, as the mine-manager and Inspector of Mines are responsible for the proper working of a mine, their certificates ought to be a sufficient guarantee that only capable men will be employed in the positions named.

11. As a rule, neither masters nor men wish to work at a colliery on Sundays, but there are cases where it is absolutely necessary, and in the interests of the men themselves as well; therefore, I think that time and a half is ample and fair to both employer and employed, and that time and a quarter on week-days is enough, because, owing to want of trucks when wanted, or a rush of orders requiring to be supplied or lost for good, and for other reasons well known to every colliery manager and beyond his control, he simply cannot help it.

12 and 13. No. Both propositions are too absurd to discuss.

14. I agree with every word our mine-manager says. To give a check inspector such power as the Council asks would be a most dangerous precedent, and I venture to say that if such a clause was passed, every colliery-owner in New Zealand would sooner close down than allow it to be put in force, for it is an insult to the owners as well as the mine-manager, and also to the Inspector of Mines.

15. If this were agreed to, it would open the door to every kind of abuse, and close down many collieries in the colony, as men may take an hour each way to go and come from work, after leaving the surface or returning to it. You may as well say that the time of all the Civil Service in the Wellington Government Offices should count from the first block after leaving their homes, no matter when they start work.

16. Goes without saying.

Conclusion.—It is just as well that the Trades Council and the members of your Committee should know now that, although colliery and other employers have apparently been asleep for some years past, they are now thoroughly roused, owing to the continuous demands made on them from year to year for more money and concessions; also for interference in the discipline, control, and management of their business by the unions and paid agitators, in which there is no finality, and will resist to the utmost further demands made on them, which are all "Give, give," and no take, and are not in the interests either of the employees or the public, because in the long-run the latter have to pay for them.

Mining is always a risky business, and the capitalist who embarks in it is entitled to a return of at least 10 to 12 per cent. on his money, besides putting by a substantial reserve fund; yet, how few get it! Take our own case: we waited eighteen years for a dividend (would the worker wait eighteen years for his pay?), and two years and a half ago, without a moment's warning, we had a fire in our mine which took two years to put out, and cost us nearly £3,500 in hard cash. The Westport Company waited twelve years for a dividend.

WILLIAM HANDYSIDE, Managing Director.

Answers to Suggestions, by Mine-manager of the Nightcaps Coal Company (Limited).

1. No. There are too many inspectors already appointed for the good of the country.

2. No, certainly not; or any other man before the Government Inspector or some one that he may authorise.

3. It is not convenient at any colliery to erect an office at the mouth of any mine to pay the workmen. All offices in England are from 300 to 400 yards to a quarter of a mile from the seat of operations. At Dowlais, in Wales, the office is two miles from the nearest colliery, and the company have seven.

4. There is no coal company but what is likely to get the best explosives for use in their mine. No one would be foolish enough to get the inferior article.
5. As the Coal-miners' Union in New Zealand is such a powerful organization, why cannot they start a fund for their own benefit? They will want the Government soon to pass a Bill to pay for their groceries.
6. Same answer as No. 5.
7. What right has the union to have the liberty to look over time-books and wage-sheets when they are paid the wages awarded to them by the Arbitration Court? Ridiculous.
8. Quite right.
9. It is not necessary for any colliery to run their fan or fire up their furnaces in any mines when the men are not working. If the fan or furnace is going at its full capacity twenty minutes before the men enter the mine and ten minutes after they leave the mine, this is quite sufficient for the most fiery collieries that ever were worked in Britain, and, in my opinion, it would be only a waste of money to keep them going longer.
10. Quite correct.
11. In my opinion time and a half is quite sufficient for Sunday-work, and time and a quarter for week-days.
12. Certainly not.
13. Certainly not.
14. If this clause were passed it would be a gross insult to every mine-manager and Government Inspector in New Zealand. Is this check inspector likely to know any more about dangerous places than a mine-manager, who has passed his examination, and been all his lifetime in different collieries, and seen different methods of working, &c.? The whole clause is too ridiculous to think about. To be a check inspector he would want to be a qualified mine-manager. The Government would want one of them at every mine of any size, say, where they employed sixty or seventy men. That would mean that the Miners' Union want the Government to instal about fifty check inspectors. For what? To find a billet for agitators.
15. The hours of labour are too short for the good of the country already.
16. Quite correct.

JOHN LLOYD, Mine-manager.