

from entering the river by floods or heavy seas on the bar. These causes are now merely nominal as compared with a few years past by reason of the great improvement made in the bar by the harbour-works. The amalgamation of all the mines has also very much lessened the stoppages from want of tonnage. Previously it frequently happened that while one mine was idle, all the available trucks for it being full, the other mines had steamers waiting for cargoes; consequently the stoppages from this cause are very much less than formerly. The third cause is the breakages in the machinery and pumping-appliances, faults, want of sufficient ground being opened up. Fourthly, the numerous holidays taken by miners throughout the year. Miners take several of their own making, such as anniversary of the union, &c., a week at Christmas, the same at St. Patrick's day. Cavilling, or changing places quarterly, causes a loss of output equal to one day's work on each occasion. On Saturday there is only one shift, which means only half a day's work. Then there are the usual statutory holidays and absences of individual workmen from sickness and other causes. Taking all the foregoing into consideration, I estimate the average work, when the demand for coal is continuous throughout the year, would not exceed, for all the hewers, four days per week. Many would have four days and a half, some five, while others would not exceed three.

160. What remedy would you suggest for this state of things? Have you any storage at the mine?—We have a bin to hold small coal only, available for about 500 tons, for export; then the wagons afford storage for about two days' output—about 1,000 tons. Therefore, if no steamers are loading for two days, the mine would be idle the third day. The remedy for this would be extra hopper wagons or bins at the port, equal to another two days' work, thus giving four days in all. All the carrying being in one company is as good as 500 tons extra storage, as their steamers load in the order of arrival. This could not be if split up into two or more interests.

161. Is there any provision for housing the miners?—No; they have, as a rule, houses of their own. Small houses may be rented from private owners at from 3s. to 5s. weekly, some of the larger at 7s. 6d.

162. Can you tell us anything about the prices of provisions?—Miners obtain provisions in open market at Brunnerton and Greymouth. I think the cash-prices may be taken at 10 per cent. over Wellington rates.

163. Can you tell us anything about the average rate of wages other than for coal-mining?—The wages used to run about a year ago, at, say, 8s., 9s., and 10s., but the union have insisted upon the current rate being 10s.; this has been fixed arbitrarily within the last twelve months.

164. What caused the stoppage of the Wallsend Mine?—The inferior quality of the coal, and its being fault-locked; this made the cost of working very great, and meant a serious loss, it would be safe to say, at the rate of £250 per month. We then decided to stop working.

165. How will you get out of the compulsory output clause of the lease?—We expect to put out the full quantity from the other two mines. We purpose to take as much from the two mines as if we had three going.

166. Have you had the leases amalgamated?—No; but we trust to the Government to acquiesce in that arrangement.

167. What kind of a deed would be necessary to make that quite safe?—To give it legal effect it would be desirable to have an agreement, at all events, that, so long as the whole output was obtained from one or more of the mines, it would be considered to be the output for the whole.

168. Have you applied for that yet?—No.

169. Have you any remarks as to the principle that governs the payment of wages?—Nothing, except that the company has no desire to see "average miners in average places get less than 1s. 6d. per hour's work"—that is, we intend paying piecework rates to give that. That would be the basis of any future arrangements, and for labour in the mines 10s. a day.

170. Now, with regard to the rates, assessments, &c.?—The rents are merged in the royalty, which is fixed by lease at 6d. per ton on coal sold. The rates payable to the Brunner Borough and the Grey County Council are—Brunner Borough, £347 5s.; Grey County, £90 3s. 9d.: total, £437 8s. 9d. The property-tax is paid in terms of the Act, on, say, £200,000, as per balance-sheet.

171. What property-tax does the Westport Company pay?—It pays on its £100,000. The others pay on valuation of their debentures.

172. Have you any other points upon which you wish to make a statement?—Yes. I would like to say that, in reference to the arrangement we made in giving the Union Company no coal, the action of the Seamen's Union in calling out the crews of steamers other than the Union Steamship Company rendered it impossible for us to continue working, as there was nothing left but the s.s. "Lawrence;" so that, even if the Union Steamship Company had not enforced their contract, work would have ceased immediately, as we had not sufficient tonnage left to warrant us in working the mine even on a small scale.

173. *Mr. Brown.*] You had not sufficient demand?—We could have had any quantity of demand if we could get boats to carry for us. Another objection to continuing under such restrictions is this: that we have extensive contracts throughout the colony, and these people, seeing that our mines were working, were constantly pressing us to fulfil our obligations. We found then that it would not be convenient for us to continue working under such restrictions; for instance, we have some contracts with strike clauses in them. In such instances, the parties would have a legal claim against us had we continued work and not supplied them. Further, the rates of freight by the boats that were carrying ranged from 15s. to £1 5s., and to Napier £1 15s., as against the Union Company's rates as per schedule; so that you see it would be impossible for us to fulfil our contracts with such restrictions as that put on us.

174. As to the question of the practicability of sending it all away unscreened?—I should say that would be impracticable, as it frequently happens that in sending the screened coal to our contracts they insist on rescreening it at our cost, throwing the small on our hands.