

the Brunner, at the pillars, it would be as if they were going to commit suicide. We should exclude them for their own sakes.

1282. Suppose, on the other hand, a skilled man came round and said, "I want work, and I want to get into your union"?—We would admit him, and assist him in every way.

1283. And under the present circumstances of there being a larger proportion of men than there is work for—how then would you arrange places?—Divide with them.

1284. Always?—Yes; we have been in the habit of dividing already.

1285. You said a little while ago that the management were requested not to employ any more men: do you mean, to the exclusion of some who were still members of the union, or to the exclusion of those only who were not members of the union?—If you understand, there may be some who come to the manager from other places and ask for work, when, as a matter of fact, there are already more than are really required. I think, in the interests of employers and employes, if there are not sufficient places for the number of men, it would be much better for the manager to say to an applicant for employment, "I really cannot start you; you must go somewhere else."

1286. *The Chairman.*] Does the weather stop the work at all—I mean those men who are under cover—the ordinary labourers?—We might find something for them to do inside the mine.

1287. Would the weather affect them more in the bush?—It is possible they might find more work in the bush than they would find up there.

1288. What is about the most a hewer can make in a week, in full swing the whole of his time, in the Brunner?—I think the highest average I got was £2 16s. per week, or £3 per week.

1289. What is the highest a good man could earn with plenty of work under contract?—I think he might average 11s. or 12s. per day.

1290. Is that counting broken time?—I think they might make 13s.

1291. I think the limit is 15s.?—What limit?

1292. Does not the union impose a limit to the daily wage of 15s.?—No, there is no rule to that effect. I would be very glad if I could get to that limit.

Mr. GEORGE ALFRED ANCELL sworn and examined.

1293. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A coal-miner.

1294. How long have you been in the district?—In the Brunner Company between six and seven years.

1295. Have you had any previous experience in New Zealand?—I was at Shag Point before I came here. I was engine-driving there.

1296. Have you worked in all the three mines up in Brunner?—I have worked in the Coal-pit Heath and Brunner Mines, but only a short time in the Coal-pit Heath.

1297. Hewing?—Yes, all the time.

1298. You are acquainted with all the circumstances connected with the mine?—Yes.

1299. And are you acquainted with the general feeling among the miners?—Yes, I think I am fairly acquainted with the general opinion of the miners.

1300. Can you tell the Commissioners any points of complaint they may have against the manner in which the mines are managed?—Well, I can scarcely call them complaints; but there is one thing I think they wish to be brought forward, and that is the tendency of the mine-manager since this Commission of Inquiry was commenced here not to inspect the mine more than once a week.

1301. Is that a general thing, or does it relate only to the present time?—The mine-manager does not inspect the inner workings of the mine possibly more than once a week.

1302. Does he not go into the mine more than once a week?—I could not say that, but what I have stated was the general opinion of the miners when the other Commission sat here before.

1303. By the "mine-manager" you mean the local manager?—Yes.

1304. And do you say that he does not inspect this mine more than once a week, or that he does not feel obliged to inspect it more than once a week?—I do not think he does it. I have not seen him more than about once a week during the whole of my experience. I think it is through a misunderstanding of the reading of the Act, and although the Government Inspectors rather sided with the view that the manager was only compelled to go in once a week, I consider, myself, it is contrary to the reading of the Act. I think you will find in clause 18 of "The Coal-mines Act, 1886," that the mines are supposed to be under the control and daily supervision of a certified manager; and what we contend is that the manager cannot supervise the working of a mine at the same time. The following is the clause: "Every coal-mine shall be under the control and daily supervision of a manager, and the owner or agent of every such mine shall nominate himself or some other person (not being a contractor for getting the mineral in such mine, or a person in the employ of such contractor) to be the manager of such mine." The clause there seems to point to days—it must be under the daily supervision. What we say is that unless the manager is around, and visits the inside workings of the mine once a day, he cannot be carrying out that Act.

1305. *Mr. Moody.*] Have they not overmen?—Yes, but they do not hold certificates.

1306. They inspect every part of the mine—all the working-faces?—Of course it would not be possible for the manager to go round all the working-faces in one day, but he might inspect the air-courses one day and the roads another day, and the faces the next day. I think if he would be inside the mine he would be carrying out the spirit of the Act.

1307. *The Chairman.*] Has any inconvenience arisen from this as yet? Do you know of any accident or miscarriage that you could trace to this want of supervision?—No; I cannot trace any accident to the want of it; but the mine-manager should see for himself what is required to be done, and give instructions that such work shall be done immediately, instead of having to wait for the reports of his overmen. Practically speaking, it is shifting the responsibility of the manager to the overman, and this we consider should not be done.