

1665. Can you not remember what the telegram said about that that led to the final decision? No; I could not tell you; there were so many telegrams.

1666. What, then, is the basis of the strike as you have it now? What is your impression?—That it is an effort on the part of capital to crush unionism.

1667. You think capital does not approve of unionism?—No.

1668. What was the direct question at issue which the miners came out upon? What was proposed to that meeting? You say it went to the ballot, and they decided by a majority to come out. What was the question put to you, Yea or Nay?—It seems to me that you are driving at something that does not hit the circumstances at Brunner.

1669. Oh, no; I simply want to get at the real facts of the matter?—I am quite willing to answer anything I can. When we went back to work after the previous trouble we went back on the condition that the Union Steamship Company should not get any coal.

1670. Was that one of the conditions?—Yes; and it was agreed to by the company through Mr. Bishop; and the company broke their agreement, and that caused the present trouble or interruption.

1671. Are you speaking from your own knowledge, as a member of the committee? Have you seen any of these documents before relating to the arrangements under which the men went back?—Yes. I also saw Mr. Bishop's pledge. The breach of that pledge was the loading of the "Brunner," which was the boat manned by non-union labour.

1672. Was it before or after the loading of the "Brunner" that the meeting took place at which the strike was decided on?—It was after the coals were put into the "Brunner."

1673. You regarded that as a breach of agreement?—Yes.

1674. Do you think the loading of the company's boats under the circumstances would be working alongside non-union men?—I could not say that.

1675. Your rules absolutely prohibit your working with non-union men?—They have agreed not to do so. It is a resolution, not a rule, or rather not a printed rule.

1676. And that points to your not working with non-union labour. If a steamer came in and loaded coals, would you regard it in that light?—I do not understand.

1677. You, as a body of miners at Brunner, were working as a union in these mines, and no non-union labour can work alongside of you: had a steamer come in manned by non-union labour, and you refused to load coal for her, do you consider that getting coal out to be put on a vessel where there is non-union labour is working with non-union labour?—It is not working alongside non-union labour, but we have pledged ourselves not to mine coal for such vessels.

1678. When was that pledge made, and to whom was it given?—The pledge has been made amongst ourselves.

1679. And that pledge was not given to any one?—I do not know to whom it could be given at all; it was an agreement amongst ourselves.

1680. That is the resolution we have heard about, which simply forbids working with non-union labour?—They do not seem distinct in my mind at all. They seem one and the same thing.

1681. I thought working in the mine with non-union labour was what was meant by working with non-unionists. Then, there comes the further pledge which you mention, that you will not supply the Union Steamship Company's boats manned by non-union labour?—I do not think that phase of the question has ever been dealt with; but I have no hesitation in saying that the men would not mine coal for a boat manned by a non-union crew.

1682. As a general rule, do you regard mining coal as being for the customers or for the employers? Do the customers have anything to do with the employment or the wages?—Not until the present trouble.

1683. The Grey Valley Coal Company are your employers?—Yes.

1684. Then you have no direct connection with the Union Steamship Company's boats at all, have you?—No; not that I know of.

1685. You refuse to mine for the company. Do you pass over the employers, and trace the history and the destination of this coal, and say that, unless it actually is for certain people, you are not going to cut it?—That is the position we have taken up.

1686. You mentioned a telegram received, I suppose, from Mr. Millar: was it in consequence of that communication that you have decided upon that phase of it—I mean the correspondence or the telegram received from him that was laid before the meeting and discussed?—Perhaps, in stating that some specific telegram came, you may have got a wrong impression.

1687. At any rate, there was correspondence about it. It was not a local matter?—No; it is on account of affiliation with other bodies.

1688. And you give merely mutual support when in trouble or on strike?—Yes; we mutually assist each other in times of trouble.

1689. By money-grants?—Yes.

1690. Anything else?—I do not think there is anything else.

1691. Do you regard it as assistance to anybody else that you should cease work?—I think it has been looked upon as such.

1692. But from your own experience and knowledge, have you found it as such?—If it succeeds.

1693. And has it succeeded?—I do not know as yet; it has not developed far enough.

1694. Suppose you received a telegram from Dunedin with imperative instructions to you to go to work?—It would be sifted. It would be discussed first.

1695. Is the local body here, then, under the control of itself or under the control of a distant body?—It manages its own local affairs entirely.

1696. In its general policy, is it guided by direction from without or from within? I will put it this way: Could you patch up a quarrel with your employers without reference to any one outside