

1752. *The Chairman.*] Do they charge more for getting the coal because they have to share the time?—It is the usual price. If they can work all the time even they would have to get that price.

1753. So that the sharing is a matter of charity between man and man, and the loss in the sharing is to the miner and not to the company?—Yes.

1754. What is the rate of wages outside?—For labourers' wages, 10s. a day; actual work, eight hours.

1755. Has that always been the case in your district in your time?—Yes. I know the Borough Council and the contract on the Midland Railway pay 10s.

1756. Is that for skilled labour?—No; mechanics get about £3 10s. or £3 12s. per week.

1757. Now, has that rate of wage been fixed by any one lately, or is it just what has prevailed in the district?—It has not been fixed by the union. No.

1758. Can you form any opinion as to how it has come about—whether it is in consequence of the earnings that diggers can make, or whether it is on account of the extra amount of broken time owing to weather on this coast?—I think it is owing to the climate, and the wet, and one thing or another.

1759. I should have asked if you are aware that it is in excess of any other place in the colony?—Well, living is higher; and then there is the weather. I think 10s. is paid simply on account of its being on the West Coast in particular. I would rather live over at Springfield at 7s. or 8s. a day than 10s. here.

1760. Are the rents high at Brunnerton? What could you get a four-roomed cottage for there?—I have not gone into the rent question.

1761. How do you live yourself?—I live free.

1762. You bought a section, I suppose?—Yes; I bought a section, and brought the wife over and got settled. My cottage has three rooms.

1763. What did it cost you to pay for the section?—£25 for the section.

1764. Is that an average price?—It is the eighth of an acre. It is something like an average price, or it was when I bought. The sections have gone up since, and then dropped a little.

1765. What would it cost to put up a house?—It cost about £60 for a house of three rooms.

1766. That is £85 altogether. How long has your house been standing?—About three years.

1767. I suppose yours is an average sample of the houses up there?—Yes.

1768. What is the rent for that sort of cottage?—Four or five shillings per week. When I was about to build, and thought about bringing the wife, I could not get a cottage at that time under 11s. They were scarce. I really could not tell you now what the rents are or the rates.

1769. What would such a house as you have built fetch if rented?—It might have brought 7s. or 8s. per week. They are expensive to build with casual skilled labour at 15s. per day—carpenters, paperhangers, &c.

1770. As to the restrictions, are there any restrictions at the mine which may affect the daily output?—There is no restriction in our rule; none at all.

1771. Was there not something about no miner being allowed to earn more than 15s. a day, and anything in excess of that was to be paid over to the union?—It was a limit of 16s.

1772. Was that put in a printed rule?—It was a motion passed at a general meeting in order to lead to a better distribution of the trucks in the mine.

1773. Has there been any interruption to the work in the mine for want of trucks? Perhaps you will explain what you mean?—I was going to state the reason why that was imposed was because of the places near at hand getting most of the trucks, which were sometimes pushed into the easiest of the places or the nearest or the safest, so as to keep up the movement of the working.

1774. And the near places got more trucks?—Yes. That restriction was put on to prevent that. There is no hiding the question in the least that it was undoubtedly a restriction to a certain extent upon the output. But as soon as capital ceases to hold up these particular places, where most of the trucks are to be got, and hence the highest wages—as soon as they cease to do that the restrictions will be removed.

1775. Was this a deliberate action on the part of capital, this pushing in of the trucks to a certain point?—Well, whenever there was a safe place or a place near at hand, the trucks used to be run in there. Now, it might not be at all times purposely designed by the management; it may be sometimes done by the truckers; but it was a continual source of trouble to us.

1776. Then, the people in the further parts of the mine could not get their share of the trucks; and you say it may have sometimes been the fault of the truckers?—Yes; it may have been sometimes.

1777. Had the company any direct interest in doing that?—Yes; because I see they have published a sheet of the highest and lowest wages, and I think that is a false statement altogether to the public.

1778. Do you account in this way for the great inequalities which sometimes occur between the fortnightly earnings of different men? For instance, we found from a return that we got for that fortnight ending the 19th April that one of the men earned £20 5s. 8d. for his fortnight's work, another man received £8 12s. 1d. That was in the Wallsend. We will take the Brunner for the same period: one man got £19 1s., and another 19s. 3d.?—They have held it up to the country that the men could earn more than is actually the case, as some men have had an unfair share of the tubs; and my explanation accounts for the large disparity of wages in this sheet. There are other sources you can get at.

1779. Are the men pretty steady up there at Brunnerton?—I have never been in a mining community in which there has been so little beer-drinking. We do not see any rowdiness, but I suppose there is a certain amount of drinking going on. It seems, however, to be a religious kind of drinking. For my own part, I have not tasted any liquor since I came into the colony.