

2481. Do they increase the output of coal in proportion?—Yes.

2482. Do you pay wages for the three men?—We pay the tonnage-rate; and if it were day-wages we should pay for three men. Recent propositions have been made for paying day-wages, and I put this in, which is a printed copy of the proposals of the company [Paper produced, and marked "Exhibit No. 24"].

2483. Under these recent propositions, would the company be prepared to pay three men in a place?—Yes, if we put three men in a place.

2484. Would you allow the men to do as they did before, and arrange how many should be in a place?—That would be left to the manager and the men.

2485. *Mr. Moody.*] It would depend on circumstances?—Yes; if there is a demand for coal.

2486. *The Chairman.*] But you might put yourself in an awkward position? You say that the three men do not do three men's work—that it is to a certain extent disadvantageous to have three men in a place?—I say that probably they do not do quite so much work; but it may be advantageous to get these pillar-workings out rapidly. And I may say that probably we would do that, in order to afford employment to the extra men, pending the pumping-out at Coal-pit Heath.

2487. Do you anticipate that new miners going into the mines will be subject to extraordinary risk from want of familiarity with the workings?—No, I do not think so.

2488. I mean if men went into the work who were not accustomed to mining?—We shall only put men to get coal who are either gold-miners or coal-miners.

2489. You only put men in who know the work?—Only men who have had previous experience as miners. We have a large number of deputies and roadmen who instruct these men, and experienced men have to do what our deputies tell them, and these deputies will protect and guard the new men too.

2490. Are these deputies and roadmen union men?—Most of them were union men, but we have appointed six deputies who have signified their willingness to work with either "free" labourers or unionists.

2491. Have you felt at all that your proportion of daily-wage men and surface-men had become a charge on the mine beyond what its fair proportion should be, through any circumstances of late years? Have you felt that the day-labour was in excess of the number of miners employed, thereby increasing the cost of the coal beyond what was necessary?—Yes, of late we have felt that.

2492. What do you attribute that to?—I attribute it to the miners shortening their time of working at the face, and to their restricting their output.

2493. Were these causes beyond your control?—Yes.

2494. Do you remember anything about the price of coal charged to the dealers in Greymouth before and after the amalgamation? was there any change made?—Yes, there was some change made. It was 12s. 6d. before the amalgamation, and 14s. subsequently.

2495. Were there good business reasons for that?—Yes. The 12s. 6d. did not pay the cost. The dealers used to have it specially screened: they would not take the ordinary screened coal for export, the price of which was 12s. 6d., and so through the competition they used to get the specially screened at 12s. 6d. Upon the amalgamation I knew how the thing stood, and that the 12s. 6d. was not paying us, and we fixed the rate at 14s.

2496. This rise on coal did not indicate that there was a general increase in the price of coal all through the colony?—No, not at all.

2497. What proportion did the locally-used coal bear to the coal exported?—I think I had better get the exact figures at the office. I will supply the figures. Reckoned on the screened coal only, it was $3\frac{1}{4}$ per cent.—on the unscreened weight, as paid the miners, it was under 2 per cent.—of the whole.

2498. *Mr. Moody.*] Have you dépôts here for local coal?—We confine our sales to two dealers locally, and they retail it.

2499. *The Chairman.*] You understand that I mean by local coal the coal on which the price was raised from 12s. 6d. to 14s.?—Yes.

2500. Returning to the question of royalty, have you any definite suggestion to make?—Yes. I propose: (1.) That, in lieu of royalty, I would prefer paying a reasonable percentage of the net profit resulting yearly on the coal workings and sales. (2.) That, failing this change, the 6d. royalty appears a high charge, considering the company cannot hope for over 1s. a ton profit on a fair capital value of their improvements and machinery. (3.) That, whatever royalty is maintained, it should not increase as the mine gets worked out or the workings further back and more costly, but rather the reverse; and that, small coal being sold at half-price, screened should only pay half royalty rates on actual sales. With reference to the working railways at Greymouth, I would like to add the following: There are not sufficient lines for shunting at the hydraulic cranes, and this causes great loss of time to vessels loading, and when this is being done outside of the hours between 8 and 5 the Railway Department alone receives 12s. to 14s. per hour as overtime from the vessel loading. This could be avoided by having more lines, so that the shunting could be done without interfering with the line from which the vessels are loaded. Overtime: A ship being due at tide-time, say midnight, notice must be given to the railway authorities before 5 p.m. The railway men then come out, and if the ship does not arrive she must pay the overtime just the same. Remedy: That notice be given steamer is expected, and if she arrives a man to be sent round to call the railway men some time before she is ready for loading. Railway time-table: As the present running of three trains daily is evidently sufficient for all traffic except coal, why not make the extra trains purely mineral trains, to be run at such hours as would best suit for facilitating the despatch of steamers?