

quarrel with the company; but we contend that there was a great principle at stake, and the strike has been going on at the instance of the Maritime Council really, and the refusal to supply coal to the Union Steamship Company is to assist the seamen in their endeavours to obtain the right to affiliate, one body with another.

2565. Take an extreme case. Supposing it was to some persons' interest to shut up Greymouth as a coal-port, would you not be really playing into their hands by the action the miners have taken?—Certainly so.

2566. Have you any suggestion to make as to any possible solution of this terrible difficulty?—I have been exerting myself all this last week, and I suggested terms to Mr. Kennedy on Thursday which I believe would have had the effect of settling the affair this morning could they have been accepted.

2567. What were the terms?—They were for a material reduction, and to allow the old workmen to resume work. It is advertised in this morning's paper, I believe.

2568. I presume the former question of wages did not affect the surface-men?—No.

2569. Only the miners?—Only the miners.

2570. So that they have been out on strike on both occasions without having any material point to gain for themselves?—The first occasion was a lock-out for a 20-per-cent. reduction.

2571. It did not affect the surface-men, did it? They got 10s. a day?—Yes; but the miners' trouble compelled the surface-men to go out. Where there has been work for them they have been employed all the time.

2572. But still it is true that all these men who were paid daily wages have been out on both these occasions without having any material personal object at stake?—Yes. There is no work for them when the coal-miners have left work.

2573. *The Chairman.*] Now, to return to the propositions you say you made last week—I presume to Mr. Kennedy—what were they?—They were as follows [reading from manuscript]: "That the hewers be allowed to resume work on the following basis: Pillars—Coal-pit Heath 2s. 3d. a ton, Brunner 2s. a ton; whole coal—Coal-pit Heath 2s. 8d., Brunner 2s. 6d. This agreement as to prices not to be disturbed for at least twelve months." This arrangement [explaining] contemplated the working of whole coal in the future which is at present not available, as it was thought better to settle the terms now before the men went to work, in order to avoid future disputes. Then, a further condition was that the company were to retain all non-unionists now employed or engaged, and were to be free to employ in the future unionists or non-unionists indifferently at their discretion. Also, "That a committee of two representing the owners, and two the miners, and a fifth to be chairman, be appointed, which committee shall settle all matters of disagreement arising in the course of work, such committee to be appointed for twelve months." I saw Mr. Bishop last Saturday night. I was speaking to him in the railway-station, and he asked me if anything could be done to bring about a settlement, and, after considering the matter, I thought there might be some arrangement made whereby the thing could be settled. I interviewed Mr. Bishop on three different occasions, at the very end of the week, and I made suggestions, which were considered by Mr. Kennedy, and which were finally rejected. I came down to Greymouth and saw Mr. Kennedy on Thursday, the date of this letter, and after a long discussion with him he showed me a telegram he had just received from Dunedin, stating that there were about fifty men—different kinds of miners—engaged, and that some of those might wish to have their engagement carried out; hence this clause in the proposed agreement as to all the men now employed or engaged.

2574. But was this agreed to by Mr. Kennedy?—Yes; Mr. Kennedy personally was quite willing to agree to it.

2575. But did he say he had to reserve it for the directors, or something of that sort?—He did not say that.

2576. Then, is this in force now? is it accepted by the miners as well?—No.

2577. The miners will not accept it?—They did not get the chance. Mr. Kennedy said he considered it a reasonable proposition for the settlement of the dispute, and that he would wire to Dunedin to stop any further engagement of men, as there was a likelihood of the old hands agreeing to resume work at once. He did wire at once to that effect to Dunedin. He was at Brunner on Friday and met Mr. Bishop at the mine, and Mr. Bishop sent me a long letter from Mr. Kennedy, addressed to me, stating that, as there had been considerably more men employed in Dunedin than was first stated, he could only employ about eighty of the old hands. This prevented any further action being taken on the proposed agreement.

2578. Well, then, on Saturday?—On Saturday I went to see Mr. Bishop the first thing in the morning. There was a meeting on Friday night, at which I explained the whole of my transactions in the matter, and the attempt I had made to bring about a settlement; and I read to the meeting the proposed agreement and Mr. Kennedy's letter on Friday. I saw Mr. Bishop on the Saturday morning, and told him I had done all I possibly could in the matter, but that I had failed to bring about a settlement. I then suggested to Mr. Bishop that he might go down to Greymouth and see some of the principal merchants there, and ascertain if they could bring influence to bear on the directors to allow the arrangement arrived at between Mr. Kennedy and myself to be given effect to. I came down to Greymouth and saw Mr. McLean, and he had an interview with Mr. Kennedy, who sent for me to wait upon him at his office at 2 o'clock. I did so, and he gave me a full explanation of the change in the affairs.

2579. Owing to the increased number of men that had been employed?—Yes.

2580. *Mr. Brown.*] Does that end your negotiations?—Yes; that was the last of my negotiations, and the matter rested there. Mr. Kennedy would see himself that I had done all I possibly could. He simply wanted to make an explanation of the change in the affairs and the reason for it.