

2642. At all events, the executive have taken no steps?—No. Well, I believe they did so on Friday afternoon, while I was interviewing Mr. Kennedy.

2643. Although the feeling of the men had been in favour of your proposition?—Yes, they seemed so; but my proposition could not be discussed in the face of Mr. Kennedy's telegram.

2644. You were not, under those circumstances, prepared to say to Mr. Kennedy that the men would give in?—But if he would agree to allow his own men to man the mines, and not bring those other men from Dunedin, I thought I could guarantee an answer within a couple of hours.

2645. You could not at that time say, "Here is a definite proposition from the union"?—Not from the union.

2646. In Mr. Kennedy's report to his co-directors in Dunedin they could not be informed that this was definite on the part of the miners?—But Mr. Kennedy told them that he had an assurance that such a thing could be effected.

2647. And the feeling of the miners was pretty unanimous at this crowded meeting?—Yes.

2648. In approving of what you had done?—Yes. The resolution on Friday night upheld what I had done; and on Saturday night, at a meeting which was even more packed, my action was again approved, and with a vote of thanks.

2649. *The Chairman.*] Were the officers of the union present, do you know?—The whole of them were there.

2650. Does that become an action adopted by the union?—No.

2651. It was not a formal meeting of the union?—Yes, so far as the resolution upholding what I had done was concerned, but they did not pass a resolution formally accepting the proposition.

2652. That is to say, your section of the union has now approved of an offer of a free port to the Grey Valley Coal Company?—They approved of the action I took in endeavouring to bring about a settlement.

2653. Which includes that?—Yes, which includes that.

2654. *Mr. Brown.*] What has led to the change of mind on that point? I understand that you were unanimous in going out, and from your now conceding the terms in reference to which the strike took place I take it there must be a change of mind?—I suppose the developments of the strike as they are proceeding.

2655. *Mr. Moody.*] Was this movement never thought of before this?—Yes; it has been spoken of, and a fortnight ago I was prepared to take the same steps as I have now done.

2656. *The Chairman.*] And what prevented you taking them then?—The feeling of the men themselves. I saw no chance of carrying it at that time.

2657. *Mr. Brown.*] Do the men still hold by the same principles? Has there been any alteration in their views on this point since the fortnight?—Most certainly, or I should not have taken those steps.

2658. Since the strike?—So far as their views are concerned, they are still of opinion that labour associations ought to be allowed to affiliate one with another.

2659. In fact, that the grounds of the strike were justified?—Yes; but circumstances are not favourable to the present strike being carried any further.

2660. To put it in other words, that they concede the points because they cannot carry them?—Well, they concede the points rather than carry the strike any further.

2661. Because they cannot carry those points at present?—I do not say that. I say they will concede them rather than carry it any further. They still believe in the principles upon which the strike originated, that the associations should be allowed to affiliate one with another; but it is not expedient to press it further at the present time.

2662. *The Chairman.*] Before giving in on that point has your local association to obtain the consent of the Maritime Council?—I could not say that. I would not give a direct answer.

2663. You are not aware if they will lose any position?—I am not aware of that.

2664. *Mr. Brown.*] You did not intend, yourself, to consult the Maritime Council?—In what I have done I did not consult the committee of the association until I had arranged this agreement with Mr. Kennedy, and was prepared to put something before them.

2665. Supposing the men are agreeable to go into this, and the Maritime Council, through your executive, said, "No," how would that affect your negotiations?—I believe that it would not affect my negotiations, providing the men say they will go to work.

2666. Would that have affected your negotiations a fortnight or three weeks ago?—Yes, it would. That was the reason I did not take the steps then.

2667. I think you said you were at work at Durham?—Yes.

2668. Can you give the Commissioners any information as to what the hewers' hours are at Durham?—They are from six to seven hours. I have not got the average, but I can tell you where you could get it. You could get it from the *Colliery Guardian* for the 29th August, 1890, page 330, a return moved for in Parliament by Mr. A. D. Provend. There is a full report there. It gives all the different times—the average number of hours worked from bank to bank. The time of men and boys in getting mineral in the United Kingdom is 8·6—that means about 8 hours and 35 minutes—compared with 7·43 hours, or 7½, on the face—the average time per day actually worked on the face. The usual number of days worked in the United Kingdom averaged 5½. But, of course, you can see the full report.

2669. Have you formed any opinion as to whether the surface-men at the mine are in excess of the requirements? I mean the wages-men and the truckers?—Under the present state of the mines all hands are in excess.

2670. Does that mean miners as well?—Yes. That is the reason they were working three in a place. The daily-wage men have also been in excess. Some of them have always been lying idle, so that the work might be shared.