

2671. Has that continued for any length of time with the daily men?—No, but it has with the miners a good bit.

2672. How long have they been working three in a place?—The three in a place only applies to the last three weeks' working. Previous to that the men lay idle instead of working three in a place.

2673. Did they change shifts with one another, or how?—Those who were at the places went into two men's places to-day, and then would go into another two men's places to-morrow.

2674. They would take alternate days?—They would take their turns in lying idle, to give more room.

2675. There would be four men one day and another four the next day?—Instead of putting two strange men into a place they would put one man in on each shift—that is, one man belonging to a place would lay idle a shift, and that would give two men a day's work in that place.

2676. *Mr. Moody.*] Can you tell us the amount of wage that was made in Durham when you left, for the six hours?—I could not give you the exact average, but I think it was something like 4s. 8d. or 4s. 9d. a day.

2677. What was the tonnage rate? Do you recollect?—It varied very much. There was coal got there as low as 1s. 2d. and 1s. 3d. a ton, and some paid as high as 2s. 6d. to 2s. 8d. It would depend on the thickness of the seam and the quality of the coal. In the coking collieries, where there was soft coal, the prices were very low—from 1s. to 1s. 8d. and 2s. per ton; and in the steam collieries it would be 2s. 6d. and 2s. 8d. a ton, and in some places more than that.

2678. *The Chairman.*] There was a proposition made to the Government, to which you have referred, that reduction should be made either in the royalty paid by the lessee of the mine or upon the charge for railage and wharfage of the coal: were you a party to that proposition?—No.

2679. Are you aware of arguments in favour of it?—The arguments in favour of it would come from the report of the auditors who went through the books here and in Dunedin.

2680. Did they suggest that the Government should forego the royalty?—No, it was not the auditors' duty.

2681. How do you think their report would support such a proposition?—The figures laid before them showed that there was only a small margin of profits, according to the Dunedin report, to pay for opening up the mine, proving faults, &c.

2682. Who first suggested that the relief should be given?—I do not know.

2683. *Mr. Brown.*] I think it arose in a letter from Mr. Lomas and Mr. Newton, did it not?—I do not know if Mr. Newton could give you any information upon it or not.

2684. Your suggestion is that because the mine is working at a loss—that is the only reason?—The only reason for them suggesting it would be, I think, that the average weekly wages the miners were making, and the high rate of living upon this coast, made it impracticable for them to reasonably submit to a reduction, and they thought the Government might give some relief for the time being.

2685. Was there any change in the character of the coal being worked immediately on the 8th March?—Previous to the 8th March it would be principally whole coal.

2686. Not pillars?—Not pillars. Since the 8th March there has been a great amount of pillars taken out of the Brunner Mine that have been sorely crushed.

2687. Do you think that would have affected the results?—Very materially. Had there been whole coal worked along with it, the results would not have been so bad for the company.

2688. *Mr. Moody.*] I suppose that was on account of so much small going through the screens from the pillar-workings?—Yes, and no whole coal going to recompense them for it.

2689. *Mr. Brown.*] You take it, at the pillar-workings these rates would be unprofitable?—According to the figures laid before us, yes.

2690. There was whole coal being worked up to the 8th March?—Yes; but not in the Brunner Mine.

2691. In the Coal-pit Heath?—Yes, and in the Wallsend.

2692. Have you been in the mines lately, since the stoppage?—I have not.

2693. You do not know if there are as many places open now as when the men left off?—About the same. Mr. Bishop told me on Saturday morning that he could start about twenty-four places.

2694. In Brunner or Coal-pit Heath?—In both, by working three in a place, and putting three shifts on. That would be nine men in each place, and he would very soon open up.

2695. *Mr. Moody.*] How many in a shift?—Three, and three shifts. They would have to work in three shifts if the demand required it.

2696. *The Chairman.*] In the present state of the storage would it be possible to work in three shifts?—If there was plenty of trade to demand it.

2697. That is, supposing there were plenty of boats in?—Yes.

2698. But, supposing they did not come in regularly?—Then it would mean the shifts lying off when the boats were not there.

2699. That is, on account of want of storage?—Yes; that applies regularly here.

2700. That has been usual all through?—Yes.

2701. *Mr. Moody.*] Do you think that if the present appliances for keeping water out of the Coal-pit Heath Mine had been properly applied the water would have accumulated to such an extent?—I do not know what to say about answering that question.

2702. *The Chairman.*] You are not aware of the circumstances under which the water has accumulated?—The water has accumulated there on account of the machinery being too light.

2703. *Mr. Brown.*] Is it that the machinery is too light or the steam too light?—The machinery was too light, and he had not enough steam to work them with high pressure. The new arrangements are sufficient to take the whole of the water out of the mine.