

vicissitudes of the harbour, the cost should be borne as a part of the harbour-works; while, on the other hand, it may be said that there is no reason why the harbour-works should be charged with the expenditure merely to enable the coal-mining companies to avoid the difficulties of a natural obstacle which they can avoid by storing the coal themselves at the mine. It might not, however, suit the railway for the coal to be stored at the mine, as this would necessitate the use of more coal-trucks and the running of more frequent trains over the main line, involving more locomotive-power in order to draw off the stored supplies after a block had occurred at the port. It would therefore seem to be a matter for a compromise, I think. I do not see any fixed principle upon which the expenditure could be divided.

2801. Have you considered what the working-charges of handling the coal with these bins would amount to?—I think 4d. a ton would cover the cost of handling.

2802. *Mr. Brown.*] Is that under the wagon system?—No; the bin system and double handling. It is 2½d. for putting coal into bin, and 1½d. for taking it out.

2803. What would an extra locomotive cost?—Four pounds a day. For the purpose of comparison, I furnish a table showing the result of working out the actual cost per ton that would be involved in carrying out each of these three methods of storage.

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Mr. JAMES BISHOP re-examined.

2804. *The Chairman.*] In your previous evidence, Mr. Bishop, you said there was a letter in reply to Mr. Andrew's letter of the 3rd March, and that you had replied to the whole of Mr. Andrew's letters?—I will now put in the correspondence relating to the first period I have referred to, commencing on the 24th February and ending on the 20th March. I also furnish the letters which refer to the second period, commencing on the 27th June and ending on the 5th August. [Correspondence put in, and marked "Exhibit No. 34."]

2805. You said in your previous evidence, in reply to a question, that you would rather pay 14s. a day than give 2s. 10d. a ton, because the miners could earn £1 5s. a day in the Brunner Mine at 2s. 10d., the coal was so much easier to get. Can you give some explanation of how you arrive at that? Do you say that any men ever did earn £1 5s. a day?—Yes; men have earned £1 5s. a day.

2806. Many of them?—Yes, many of them.

2807. Does that appear in the pay-sheets you have handed in to us?—I do not know if it appears there.

2808. You gave us a return of the maximum and minimum earned by the men?—I dare say some of those will reach it [looking at return]. The number of shifts worked is not shown there, so that it is difficult to say what they earn per shift; but we can produce pay-books showing the number of men who have earned £1 6s. and £1 7s. per day, fortnight after fortnight, even in the whole coal.

2809. Is it possible that any misunderstanding as to the wages earned could arise from the men acquiring double tickets?—Yes; on several occasions that has been done. The men have applied for double tickets, and I believe obtained them from our clerk.

2810. What do you mean by "double tickets"?—They used to conceal some of their earnings from their secretary, or the person who is appointed by the union to see what they were earning.

2811. How would they get over the check-taker in that case?—It would have to be for special work that they would get the separate ticket. It would not be for the coal-hewing.

2812. It would not appear on the hewing?—Anything extra they would be doing. It would not be for their hewing.

2813. And how many men do you think have been in the habit of earning these high wages?—I cannot say that exactly just off-hand; but a considerable number of them are quite able to earn that, and have earned it.

2814. At what period was that? During the gross-payment period?—Before the gross-payment period.

2815. Do you think they earned more after the gross-payment system?—Well, their average was higher; but there was not such individual high earnings as during the steam-coal period.

2816. That is, skill and experience were not of so much use to the miner in taking out whole coal as in taking out pillars?—Yes.

2817. What were the average earnings, do you consider, for the second period?—14s. 8d. a day. A return was made to that effect.

2818. And did the miners accept that?—Yes.

2819. Was there not some reduction of 4d.?—It was proposed that there should be a reduction of 4d. for lights, picks, and tools, and so on.

2820. So that 14s. 4d. was paid during the whole-coal period?—The gross-weight period.

2821. And this was accepted by the miners as a fair statement?—Yes.

2822. And was substantially the same as that arrived at by the company?—They accepted our figures, except that they wanted an allowance for picks and lights.

2823. *Mr. Brown.*] Was that a steady rate of earnings?—On gross, very steady.

2824. Or was there much broken time?—It was very steady during the gross-weight period. It was the steadiest time we have had.

2825. Then each man was, week by week, earning good pay?—Yes, practically full pay.

2826. You mentioned in the previous part of your evidence that the average rate of earning was from four and a half to five days a week: does that apply to this period?—No; they made a higher average during this gross-weight period.

2827. *The Chairman.*] You described the circumstances that led to the resumption of work pending the decision of this Commission, and that involved the question of whether a reduction should be made in the royalty or the haulage?—Yes.