

work?—Yes; sometimes they have not got a week's work in the month—it has been very intermittent. Then, again, of course there are accidents, and many when they have got any money do not, as a rule, keep it.

458. Are you in a position to know anything about the payment of rents?—Yes.

459. You own property that you let to some of these miners?—Yes. Some of the tenants are very good. There would be, I suppose, half of them who are prompt, in good or bad times, excepting since the strikes have commenced, as now all have stopped paying.

460. Do you know if they are making other payments now?—I do not think they are. I should think at the present time at Brunnerton there must be an amount outstanding of from £15,000 to £17,000 owing by the mining community. That, at least, is my impression.

461. About one-half of the tenants pay well, you say. What about the other half?—They paid moderately during the time they were at work, perhaps one-quarter they would pay, and after that some of them would not pay at all.

462. And now all are in arrear?—Yes.

463. Does that apply to miners or surface-men?—All of them together.

464. Do the men give any reasons for not paying rent?—Want of money, they say.

465. Do the men get any strike pay?—I think not. They only get food-cards.

466. What hours do you have in the coal-pits?—Eight a.m. to four p.m.—practically seven hours' work. In the case of where they have long distances to go, they sometimes take half an hour to get to their work. We should not sometimes get more than six and a half hours' work—that is, actual work at the face—out of them.

467. Eight hours has been the very longest, then?—Yes. Our day-men, of course, work from 8 to 5, allowing one hour for dinner.

468. Have you heard anything about unreasonable demands for holidays?—Yes, that has been known to arise. When there are holidays they will have them; it would not matter to them how long they had been idle before. If St. Patrick's Day happened to come just after a few idle weeks, they would take the holidays; they will not make the slightest attempt to make up a little for the forced holidays by working on fixed ones.

469. What is the longest period at which they are forced to be idle on account of want of shipping, &c.?—I suppose a week. I have known nearly a fortnight, when there has been a real block, and a great deal more for sailing-vessels; but this was in the earlier days. Then all the ships would come up together.

470. Do many sailing-vessels come now?—Not many; it is mostly all done by steamers.

471. I suppose the Union Steamship Company takes most of the coal?—Yes, and the Anchor line.

472. What does the Coal-pit Heath Company do with its slack?—It used to make what it could into coke. Of course there was always a percentage of the dross that had to go into the river, as it could not be utilised.

473. Did you get a fair profit on the coke?—Yes.

474. What price did you get?—I think about £1 or £1 5s. f.o.b. from Greymouth. It used to cost us 6s. to make it—that was, for the actual burning. I suppose it would take about 60 per cent. of small for coke.

475. You never used the fireclay at the Coal-pit Heath?—No, the fireclay there was not get-at-able.

476. *Mr. Moody.*] How do you account for this state of indebtedness on the part of the miners?—It is no doubt caused to a great extent by the irregularity of the work, occasioned by the state of the bar very often. That is one of the reasons; but I think a great deal of the indebtedness is due to a want of thrift, and to the fact that the business people are too liberal; they give too much credit, and supply them too largely.

477. *The Chairman.*] Are the interruptions to the miners' work greater or less since the amalgamation of the mines?—Until this stoppage arose they were doing very well, and a good trade was being done. I think that probably the business has a good deal to do with the grain seasons. If the grain season is very good a large quantity of grain goes to New South Wales, and the boats bring back shipments of coal as ballast, and sell at a very low figure.

478. They are the great competitors of the West Coast coals?—Yes; all the time they are conducting this business the West Coast mines are very much affected. I think this last year there has not been such a quantity of produce carried away to New South Wales; consequently the business in coal was better here. I know, in fact, that that has something to do with it.

479. During the drought in New South Wales vessels took produce over, and brought back coal and competed with the coal here?—Yes.

480. Is there any coke imported into New Zealand?—No.

481. Do you know what becomes of the coke made here?—Until the Broken Hill turned up most of it was used in New Zealand, and some was sent to Melbourne; but now, since the Broken-Hill rush, of course large amounts have been sold over there. I am not aware what price they got for it.

482. Is there any difference in the price of freights for coal and coke?—Yes; coke is charged at freight and a half on account of its bulk. Even the railways charge more for coke.

483. What appear to be the prospects of the Stillwater seam?—Well, we have just opened that up; the prospects are very favourable; the roof is improving, and the coal is getting flatter towards the eastward; the seam is now about 3ft. 6in., and is slowly thickening. The quality of the coal is very good, and access is convenient.

484. What area have you?—We have 640 acres, on a twenty-one years' lease.

485. In your opinion, is there still abundance of coal in the Greymouth district?—Yes, I am satisfied there is. Of course there are great drawbacks to be met with on account of the number of