

and long-continued pressure joined in by all coal-owners and workers may ultimately succeed in getting some concession, but I fear the time has not arrived, and meantime the trade of this place is being ruined, and the need for reduction on all hands is becoming intensified. As I have already said to you, our trade is leaving us, people are finding their coal-supply in other directions, and if the stoppage is prolonged our contracts will be gone, and all other channels of trade closed against us. The offers made you are more liberal than I am justified in making, and your council should not lightly set them aside.—Yours truly, J. BISHOP.—P.S.: If your council still considers it best to see Government *re* rail-age charge, I should recommend their doing so at once, and I feel sure the company will assist deputation all they can.

Brunnerton, 8th August, 1890.—Mr. James Bishop, Mine-manager.—DEAR SIR,—Messrs. Lomas and Newton have been appointed to go to Wellington to endeavour, in concert with your company, to get a reduction on the charge for carrying coal on the Brunner line. We have some hope of success, but in the meantime are of opinion that it would not be conducive to a good result to make the matter public just now. Mr. Newton will leave by the 2 o'clock train, and if there is any plans you would like to send Mr. Kennedy, or any suggestions to make, Mr. Newton would be glad to take them. We had hopes that you could have started Brunner and Coal-pit Heath on a temporary settlement in the meantime, as requested.—Yours truly, S. ANDREW, General Secretary, A.M.L.A.

Brunner Mines, 19th August, 1890.—Mr. Samuel Andrew, Secretary, Grey Valley Coal-miners' Association.—*Re* Royal Commission, &c.—DEAR SIR,—On receiving your letter informing me that Royal Commission was to be appointed, and suggesting work being resumed at old rates pending report of the proposed Commission, I wired to Wellington, and have just now received the following reply: "Cabinet proposes appointing Commission to examine whole question, including miners' earnings, meantime taking legislative authority to give effect to Commission's report; and asks miners to start work immediately, allowing 8d. off present rates. Delegates refuse this, or to allowing inquiry into their earnings. Association should act on this proposal, reserving the right to discontinue if insufficient allowed them." This is the wire as I have it. I think it becomes the duty of your executive to set about solving the difficulty by making some such concession as indicated by this telegram, reserving right as suggested.—I am, &c., JAMES BISHOP.

Brunnerton, 20th August, 1890.—Mr. S. Andrew, Secretary, Grey Valley Miners' Association.—DEAR SIR,—In further reference to the matter of hewing-rates, &c., I may be allowed to remind you of the opinion to which I gave expression prior to the departure of your delegates to Wellington—viz., that "I could not see any hope or chance of Government making the concession which your delegates were empowered to ask for." In this opinion I am confirmed by a letter from the Hon. the Premier to Messrs. Lomas and Newton, setting forth that the Government are prepared to appoint, or, rather, they suggest the appointment of, a Royal Commission to inquire into the matter affecting this dispute. Since reading this letter and considering it in all its bearings I am satisfied that if a resumption of work has to take place the parties affected will have to rely on their own resources. From the outset I have advocated a settlement by arbitration (and do so still), and by the men accepting this mode of dealing with the matter work need not have stood a day. As it is now I appeal to your executive to bring forward proposals giving such concession as may, together with other reductions to be made in the staff, give the company some chance of carrying on the work pending the decision of an Arbitration Court. Further, I may just repeat, by continuing the present state of things works necessary for opening-up of mines is being delayed, and by this your members will be longer out of employment they need otherwise be; trade is also being lost, and the need for reduction increased. I take it for granted that you are fully aware of the amount of wages being lost in the meantime, but for general information may state it here. This being the fifth week of stoppage, the men employed at the mines have lost £6,250, and putting cartage of timber and other wages will reach £6,500, and taking the workers in connection with loading and handling the coal at Greymouth the sum lost to the district will not fall far short of £10,000, figures large enough to make all concerned feel exceedingly anxious that a settlement should be arrived at as speedily as possible. Hoping you will give the matter your careful consideration, I am, &c., JAMES BISHOP, the Grey Valley Coal Company (Limited).

570. How did the idleness cease? What was the first action that led to the resumption of work?—What brought it about was this: When the delegates returned from Wellington they offered to concede 2d. per ton permanently on the 2s. 10d. for gross weight, and 2d. per ton on the 2s. 6d., and in addition to that they would concede 3d. per ton in each case pending the report of this Commission.

571. Was that offer made in writing?—Yes. I will read it:—

28th August, 1890.—Mr. James Bishop, Mine-manager.—DEAR SIR,—I have to inform you that the Association has consented to a reduction of 2d. per ton on pillar rates; also, in order to effect a temporary settlement pending the result of the Commission about to be appointed, a further reduction of 3d. per ton on pillar work is agreed to. Expecting this will end the dispute, I remain, &c., S. ANDREW, Secretary.

This was not the first offer, for previous to the delegates going to Wellington an offer of 2d. reduction was made: in fact negotiations had been going on during the previous six weeks.

572. Was there any suggestion about a reduction of royalty?—Yes; many suggested a reduction of royalty, but of course I took no notice of representations on this point. They sent a man to Wellington to interview the Government, and on their returning with this additional offer the miners commenced work again.

573. Then they went to work?—Yes.

574. What followed next?—All the mines were worked—Coal-pit Heath, Brunner, and Wallsend.

575. How many men were employed?—About one hundred and eighty hewers in the three mines.

576. In these negotiations all the hewers only were affected?—Yes, so far as wages are concerned.

577. It did not affect surface-men?—No. There were about one hundred and ninety surface and other men, and they were also out.

578. They returned also to work—truckers, screen-men, and all?—Yes.

579. They were on day wage?—Yes.

580. Did they resume at their former wages?—Yes; 9s. to 12s.

581. Did these men return to work without gaining anything?—Yes.

582. When the Wallsend Mine was closed on the 14th August, how many hewers did that throw out?—From forty to forty-four about.

583. And how many surface-men?—About thirty surface and other wages men.

584. Were these men taken on to increase the output in the other mines?—We could not employ them all, but we put them on to any special work there was for them to do as far as possible. We, however, had really very little for them. We had not places in the other mines to take them up.

585. What do you mean by saying there were no places for them?—There were not places enough opened up in the mine-workings for them all,