

586. Would it have been possible to have increased the output so as to increase the number of men, by opening up fresh works for instance?—Yes; it would have been possible in about three months.

587. Was the demand for coal sufficient to employ them all?—No. It has never been enough to keep the three mines going. I may say that one reason why we were short of places at that time was on account of the trouble with water in Coal-pit Heath.

588. How did that arise?—Extra water getting into the mine.

589. There was no cessation of pumping during the strike?—No.

590. I suppose it had something to do with the weather?—Yes; it was surface-water.

591. And it had nothing to do with the strike?—No.

592. What was the next stage leading to the present state of affairs? Did you consider at this time that the lock-out had ceased?—Yes, we expected it had ceased, and that the subject of wages was closed, pending the decision of the Commissioner, as agreed in Mr. Andrew's letter of the 28th August.

593. What followed?—Trouble arose with the Shipping Company.

594. On what date?—On the 30th August, 1890, the Secretary wrote me the following letter, when the delegates had returned from Wellington, and they were about to go to work:—

30th August, 1890.—Mr. James Bishop, Mine-manager.—DEAR SIR,—Please understand that one of the conditions of the settlement is that the coal mined shall be carried by vessels manned by union sailors, the miners declining to fill coal directly or indirectly for the Union Shipping Company, or any other company employing black-leg labour. We understand from your letter of to-day there is no misunderstanding on this point. If your company should determine on any other course, we shall be obliged if informed so at once.—Yours truly, S. ANDREW, Secretary.

595. With reference to this letter, had such conditions ever before been mooted?—There was no condition about shipping mentioned.

596. Do you think it arose from any circumstance connected with the Brunner Mine or district? No; it is purely from some outside source.

597. Did you reply to this?—I had written to this effect: that owing to shipping difficulties we might not be able to start the mines as soon as we had intended. The following are letters I sent to the Secretary:—

Brunnerton, 30th August, 1890.—Mr. S. Andrew.—DEAR SIR,—In consequence of the difficulty in connection with shipping, it is doubtful if much work can be done next week. But I am informed that we may have steamers and sailing-vessels apart from the Union Company and manned by union men, in which case I presume there would be no difficulty about our loading them. Feeling sure there would not be, I have wired Mr. Kennedy to get such steamers if possible. Meantime the arrangement to start Coal-pit Heath on Monday will be carried out by our getting coal for local requirements.—Yours truly, JAMES BISHOP, the Grey Valley Coal Company (Limited).

Brunner Mine, 2nd September, 1890.—Mr. Samuel Andrew, Secretary, Miners' Association.—DEAR SIR,—I find a number of men cavilled into Coal-pit Heath, and probably Brunner Mine, who are not entitled to be there, and I must say that their being put there looks as though the executive of your Association wish to add to the loss from which this company is already suffering. But, whether or not, I must protest against men being set on by the Association. Men wanting employment must be good enough to apply at the mine office. Successful working cannot be attained under a system such as now being considered. In conclusion, I regret having to say that we cannot, pending shipping troubles, work more than a single shift in Brunner and Pit Heath Mines. Hoping this will only be temporary, I am, &c., J. BISHOP.

The next letter is dated 7th September, from Mr. Andrew again:—

7th September, 1890.—Mr. James Bishop, Mine-manager.—DEAR SIR,—The Committee is of the opinion that it would save the time of the Commission about to sit here, and give part of the evidence to be collected a more reliable character, if yourself and the Committee could agree on an average wage, to be stated, that would be true in every particular. Your statement on this head and those made on the authority of the Association could not be reconciled by the general public: not, perhaps, because they differed materially as to the facts, but in the forms they were placed, and the impressions they were intended to convey. Your figures, for instance, showed an average wage for coal-hewers of 14s. 8d. per day, whereas if the day-work shown on the same table had been worked on the average (and, being incidental to the coal-hewing, it should have been) the average would have been reduced to about 14s. 4d. I suppose you will readily admit that any part of this that may be required for tools and lights cannot be counted as wages. During the time the average has been taken over, a greater proportion of pillar-coal was worked than in any former period. This enabled a larger average wage to be earned than would have been the case had Kimberley workings been kept going, as our averages plainly show. These are fair considerations, which should be allowed to have their due weight before the Commissioners. An early answer to the suggestions herein contained will oblige, yours truly, S. ANDREW, Secretary.

598. Did you answer that letter?—I do not think I replied to that letter, but I met a deputation.

599. Then, having suggested that, they have taken no further action in this particular direction?—No. At that time none of the Union Steamship Company's steamers were available. We were depending on any small steamers we could pick up outside the Union Steamship Company. The next thing is a letter written by myself to Mr. Andrew, as follows:—

Greymouth, 20th September, 1890.—Mr. Samuel Andrew, Secretary, Miners' Association.—DEAR SIR,—I have to inform you that the Union Shipping Company insist on having the carrying of all output from the Grey Valley Coal Company's mines as provided for by contract: this being so, the Greymouth agent may at any time receive orders to load one of these steamers, and give all available coal. Further, I may say the present output of coal does not supply the company's contracts, so that they are now threatened by heavy penalties; thus it is to the Coal Company's interest and to the miners' interest that a larger output should be procured, and, without shipping, such cannot be got. If so, may I ask you to take into consideration the advisability of allowing the miners to continue working, so long as the cargoes carried by the Union Company's vessels are delivered in fulfilment of Grey Valley Coal Company's contracts. Hoping you will bring the matter under the notice of your Executive, I am, &c., JAMES BISHOP.—PS.: Will be at Wallsend Office to-morrow evening at 5 o'clock, and will be glad to confer with you or any other member of the Association.—J.B.

Before the 20th September the Union Steamship Company had resumed running their boats, and this was written in consequence of their resuming. On the same day I received the following letter from Mr. Andrew, demanding an idle day:—

20th September, 1890.—Mr. James Bishop, Mine-manager.—DEAR SIR,—I have to request you to lay the mines idle on Monday, as, owing to business requiring a general meeting, one will be called at 10 o'clock in the morning.—Yours truly, S. ANDREW, Secretary.

I handed Mr. Andrew my letter, and he handed me his on the Saturday evening.