

keeping watch on vessels safely moored alongside any home wharf on Sundays or stated holidays be allowed time off in any port when convenient as an equivalent. (5.) That when time off is charged against overtime it shall be equivalent to the same in monetary value. Time off shall be given only at the home port, or at the port where the man resides, except as provided in clause 4. (6.) That there shall be five statutory holidays during the year—viz., Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Queen's Birthday, Good Friday, Eight Hours Demonstration or Labour Day. Overtime to be paid on these days as per clause 2. (7.) That there is no necessity for the recommendation of the Board to apply to Messrs. Leyland and O'Brien so long as they pay the same rate of wages as at present. (8.) The companies shall have the same right of employing non-members of the union as at present, but shall afford to members of the union the same right of employment as to others, and the fact of a man who has applied to the said company being a member of the said union shall not operate to prevent his obtaining such employment. (9.) The company shall have the same right as at present to engage hands by agents. (10.) The Seamen's Union representative is not to visit members on board ship. (11.) That this agreement shall be binding for the term of two years from the 1st October, 1897.

All the parties concerned agreed to the recommendations.

Reefton.

The Board met to consider the dispute between the Miners' Union and the Consolidated, Inkerman, Keep-it-Dark, and Big River Companies.

The statement of the union was as follows :—

(1.) Shift bosses : There was no dispute with respect to these. Their wages were at present what was mentioned in the order of reference—11s. 8d. per shift. But the union wished to protect these men by having their wages fixed under award, otherwise their wages might be reduced. For instance, some time ago the Consolidated Company intimated that they would reduce the wages of shift bosses ; but they evidently thought better of it, as the wages were still 11s. 8d. The shift boss occupied a responsible position, being really an underground manager, and no possible harm could be done by fixing his wage as the union desired.

The Chairman here asked for a list showing the existing scale of wages, which was provided by Mr. Boyd.

(2.) Timber-men : Mr. Betts pointed out that their case was similar to that of the shift bosses. Their pay was 11s. 8d., and the Miners' Union now merely wanted that sum fixed under award.

(3.) Rise, winze, and shaft : This was a heavier class of work than that of working in stopes and levels, and in fairness should be better paid. They were asking 11s. per day for this class of work. This would be an increase on the existing rate—9s. 6d.—but in his opinion the nature of the work—more strength and skill being necessary—justified the increase.

(4.) Miners, 10s. : This was the old rate of wages, and in their opinion it should never have been reduced. He contended that the award last year of 9s. 6d. was on account of the dead-work before the Consolidated Company. That should by this be pretty well through. It was well known that there was abundance of rich ore in the Globe and Progress which could be crushed.

(5.) Truckers : They were demanding £2 10s. per week for these. Their work was necessarily very laborious. Formerly, even within the last three years, they were paid as high as £3 10s.

(6.) Battery-feeders : They were also entitled to £2 10s. Their work was necessarily tedious, and in view of the fact that there would soon be more crushing their work would become more arduous.

The Chairman asked Mr. Boyd what were the wages now being paid for this class of work. Mr. Boyd replied that so far the company had no batteries to feed.

(7.) Men working in bad air or wet ground to work six hours per shift : Mr. Betts said that none but practical miners knew the danger of working in foul air or in wet ground. The Coal-mines Act made specific provision as to ventilation, but no such provision was made in the legislation affecting gold-mining.

(8.) Pick-and-shovel labour, 10s. per day : It was never understood last year that the term "surfacermen" included all pick-and-shovel labour, but it was tacitly understood that "surfacermen" meant men at work on the immediate surface of the mine. Nevertheless, the Consolidated Company had taken advantage of the omission in the award, and had reduced pick-and-shovel labour to the level of what was understood by "surfacermen"—8s. per day. Ordinary pick-and-shovel labour was never in question in the dispute of last year. The company had taken advantage of an oversight. He would also point out that men who followed this class of labour had broken time, especially in this climate, whereas miners had not this disadvantage to contend against. Therefore, to say the least, they were entitled to as much as miners. They could not in the West Coast climate make more than four days a week.

(9.) Bushmen : They were in the same position as shift bosses and timber-men, in that they were now paid the rate mentioned in the order of reference—12s. Their work was particularly laborious, as they had to cut and carry timber along the steep declivities. All the union contended for was to insure them against possible reduction.

(10.) Men in charge of shafts and batteries : These men, like the others he had referred to, received the rate mentioned in the order of reference—£4 per week. He need hardly say they filled responsible positions, as the amalgam was under their control.

The Chairman : Suppose a man is dishonest, and steals the amalgam, who suffers ?

Mr. Betts argued that dishonesty was often induced by low wages. To pay men inadequately was often to make thieves of them.

Mr. Thorburn would like to state that men who discharged the duties referred to were paid £4 per week salary. Men in charge of shafts were really blanket-washers, and were satisfied with £3 per week.

Mr. Betts did not doubt Mr. Thorburn. The person whom he (Mr. Thorburn) had in his mind was, no doubt, in receipt of the salary stated, but he was an exception, as he did smith's work, &c., but as a general rule the men referred to in the order of reference had charge during the midnight shift.

(11.) Blanket-washers : They were asking £3 10s. for this class of labour, which would be remuneration in keeping with their responsibilities. They had charge of the batteries during their shifts.

(12.) Rock-drill men : They were asking for these an increase from 9s. 6d. to 11s. 8d., and this was justified by the unhealthy nature of their work, which was the most trying of any in mining. What with the fumes of dynamite and the dust which the men inhaled it was no small wonder that their health soon gave way. As a rule, a man who followed this class of work for three years broke down in health.

The Chairman saw no reason why these men should be specialised. Any man who was a miner knew the work of rock-drilling.

Mr. Betts admitted that a rock-drill worker was necessarily a miner, but there were some miners who never used a rock-drill. It by no means followed that a man who worked in a mine could necessarily do this class of work.