

157. How many miners have you employed?—Our total number of hands is about one hundred.

158. I am speaking about coal-hewers alone. I mean the men working at the face?—About forty coal-hewers at the present time.

159. And the average wages that these men earn is about £2 13s. per week?—That is so for this year.

160. Which means that their weekly earning-wage was about £2 13s. How many underground managers have you looking after these forty men?—We have an underviewer and two deputies.

161. That is, three under mine-managers?—They are workers; they do the timbering and laying the roads as well as looking after the safety of the miners.

162. Yes, but there must be some one in charge of them?—There is simply one underviewer, who is in charge, and does nothing but attend to the safety of the mine. There is one underviewer who does little else but work about the mine and look after its safety. There are two deputies under him again, who lay the roads and put in the timber.

163. Who takes up your duties while you are at present here in Wellington?—An underviewer.

164. The gentlemen you mentioned just now?—Yes.

165. And in that case the two under-deputies will virtually have charge of the mine. He cannot be always underneath?—He does not take the whole of my duties. He takes up my duties so far as the mine is concerned. Our clerk there looks after the outside work.

166. There are then three managers, the two underviewers and yourself for forty men. How are the other fifty-six men employed?—There are a number of truckers, and then there is a blacksmith and striker, a carpenter, and rope roadmen. We have a considerable number of boys and others on the rope-road clipping and unclipping the tubs. We are bringing the coal a considerable distance to our bins. Then there is the weighing on the bins and the tippers.

167. The point I am trying to bring out is to see whether the Westport-Cardiff Coal Company is as economically managed from a mining point of view as possible. You are only employing forty miners, and they seem to have to carry on their backs forty additional men—that is what I am trying to bring out?—You see, miners only hew the coal and set the timber to keep themselves safe in the face. Besides the men we have employed on the coal we have a number employed at dead work. We meet with a great number of faults, and have a considerable quantity of rock-cutting to do. Although these men are actually working at the coal, we sometimes have as many working at stone as at coal.

168. The coal is very broken in your mine?—Yes, we have a great deal.

169. You also stated that the Cardiff miners volunteered to work for 3d. a ton less for your company than they could procure in the Denniston mine?—It was owing to the heavy haulage charged—the 3s. 2d. on the railway. It was to assist the company that the men volunteered to do that.

170. You virtually told the men that if this was not done you would have to shut down? Was not that the ultimatum submitted to the coal-miners in the Cardiff Company?—It did virtually amount to that. We said we could not carry on.

171. And the men had their little homes round about the place and they did not care to shift; and they said, considering the difficulty, we will take less?—Of course, many of our men prefer living there to living at Denniston or elsewhere. They are living on the flat, and they have five-acre sections, and are more comfortable than they would be at Denniston, and prefer working for us at a little less than working on top of the hill.

172. What rate per ton do you pay your miners, that is, for coal-hewing alone?—2s. 1d.

173. And at Denniston they pay 2s. 4d.?—Yes.

174. You stated that the cost of this coal was 11s. per ton; that is the total average? Does this include haulage to the port of shipment?—Yes.

175. Is this 2s. 1d. for what is known as round coal, or for coal taken as it comes from the face? And you do not ask the miner to screen it?—No; every tub is weighed.

176. When it comes to the top?—Yes; before it is tipped into the bins.

177. Do you make the miners give you what is known as “miners’ weights”?—Generally the weights give out in favour of the miner. We pay them for more coal than we ship.

178. The position, then, is that the miner receives 2s. 1d. for his work?—Yes; 2s. 1d. for all coal produced.

179. And you are expected to pay the Government 6d. a ton royalty, which, with $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for the Miners’ Accident Fund, makes 2s. $7\frac{1}{2}$ d., for every ton of coal that leaves the face?—Yes.

180. Can you tell me how the expenses are reckoned up to such an enormous extent that before you can carry the coal from the face it costs you 5s. 4d., and that before you can carry it from the mine-mouth to the port of shipment it stands you 11s., and that even then it is cut pretty fine?—That is correct. There is 3s. 2d. to go on for railage.

181. For a distance of thirty miles, 3s. 2d.? And you consign your coal principally to the large cities. You do not sell that coal at that price at the port of shipment?—Our average selling price is not more than 11s. We sell some for less, and some we get more for.

182. Do you ship on your own account, consigning to agents, or sell to agents at the port of shipment?—We usually consign to agents at the port of shipment; but I have nothing whatever to do with that.

183. I want to trace it from the mine-mouth to the consumer, and I want to know if you are in possession of the information I want to get. And I want to know why the coal, from the time it leaves the miner’s hands till it gets into the consumer’s hands, gets, by one thing and another being added on to it, to such an exorbitant price?—I have practically done with the coal when it leaves the mine.