

(12.) The recognised hours of surface labour all over the colony is eight hours per day, generally with a half-holiday concession on Saturdays, and the conditions are infinitely better as regards fresh air and sunshine than that of the miners. We would therefore urge upon you the necessity and justice of reducing the hours of labour for underground workers, taking into consideration the unhealthy and dangerous nature of the occupation.

(13.) If the concession as asked for is conceded we contend that there will be no extra cost of production, as a miner cannot work constantly and energetically for a period of eight hours, but will be able to work more effectively for a shorter period, and produce as cheaply as if the longer hours obtained.

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From the BLACKBALL MINERS' UNION.

THIS union tenders the following: That for persons employed underground, having to contend with impure air, caused by explosives, decayed timber, and the various gases found in mines generally, eight hours from bank to bank should constitute a day's work, seeing that with outside workmen eight hours is generally recognised as a day's work; and this union thinks it unfair to expect men employed underground to work more than eight hours from bank to bank.

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From the GRANITY CREEK COAL-MINERS' UNION.

Granity, 22nd July, 1902.

WE beg to state that we are desirous of establishing eight hours from bank to bank as a day's work for miners. We point out the following reasons in support of our contentions. Miners hewing coal at contract rates only work eight hours from bank to bank. Considerable experience has proved it is long enough, and it is the present practice with them. The introduction of machinery necessitates a number of youths of tender years as machine-assistants, and, as those machines work principally at night, we consider eight hours a fair thing for them underground. Mines working three shifts are compelled to work eight-hour shifts, and we think it only fair that all mining should be on an equal footing. We do not wish that a mine only working two shifts of eight hours and a half each should have an advantage over the one that would employ more labour working at its fullest capacity.

We also wish to point out that coal-mines extend rapidly, and the two premier mines in the colony, Millerton and Denniston, work near the surface, and it is a simple matter for them to make an opening to the surface, and declare it the mine-entrance, so it will be obvious that the companies will not suffer. It will also be a guarantee for workmen building homes that they will have ample time to get to those entrances by having only eight hours underground.

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From the COROMANDEL MINERS' UNION.

THIS union considers that the words "exclusive of meal-times" should be deleted from clause 5 of the Mining Act of 1901.

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From the GREY VALLEY UNION OF WORKERS.

Brunner, 25th July, 1902.

IT is the unanimous desire of the miners (both coal and quartz) that eight hours from bank to bank should constitute a day's work, and as evidence the Trades and Labour Council—a body that represents the whole of the West Coast miners, and is practically composed as such—has year after year since its very inception passed resolutions at each and every meeting praying for this measure to be placed on the statute-book. And it is no new thing, as it is in force in the greatest part of England.

A "miner" should be defined to mean all people employed underground. This has always been accepted as a proper thing by the miners and managers alike until Judge Cooper gave a contrary interpretation some time ago, and from that date some collieries have paid their truckers half an hour short per day, as they hold they have not worked a full day in eight hours.

That arrangement seems so absurd to this union that they think any person will see the force of your proposed alteration when the matter is explained.

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From J. P. MILLINGTON, Surgeon, Blackball.

I BEG to report that an unusual amount of sickness has occurred in the pit here of late. Having acted as medical officer to coal-pits at Home in England, I have had some experience in these matters. I have tested the air from several parts of the pit and the water running through, and find both noxious. In fact, at present no wound, however slight, which has been caused in the pit will heal in an ordinary way. Personally, I have been obliged to go into the pit on several occasions, and have felt the effects, which were not always transitory, of the gases and foul air. There is a great deal of illness amongst the miners which is peculiar to those workers, and only amongst those working in the pit. I feel sure that it is caused by their dangerous surroundings and bad air in this pit. At present I have five of the miners laid up. As a rule, I have to visit at least half a dozen per week ill, with a possibility, or even probability, that the air in the pit is a strong factor in their illness.