

203. Do you think that when they require the doctor's services mostly they ought to have a say in his appointment?—They have the whole management of it. The appointment rests with the owners, but the owners take no more heed or charge of the management; it is all left to the men. I understand that that arrangement is going on satisfactorily at Denniston.

204. The men and their families pay most of the doctor's medical fees, do they not?—Yes, they are bound to.

205. And require most of his professional services?—Yes.

206. As a matter of fact, do the employees of the company pay into this Medical Fund—say, the permanent staff; I do not mean yourself and others?—Yes; the official staff pay to the Medical Fund.

207. They are not numerous compared with the men?—No.

208. You say that we should be taking away the liberty of the men by compelling them, under this Bill, to pay to the Medical Fund?—I mean that you take the liberty away from the men in compelling them to pay to a certain doctor.

209. Are they not compelled to pay him now?—The owners will not keep a man if he is not giving satisfaction to their men.

210. Do you say that as a definite statement?—I do. If proof was brought forward that a medical man was negligent of his duty, or incapable, they would not keep him.

211. Do you know anything about friendly societies?—No, nothing about them. I was never connected with one.

212. Do you know how the members pay their medical pence?—No. I know nothing about them.

213. Does your company collect this money now?—Yes, it is deducted from the men every fortnight.

214. I mean at Denniston?—Yes.

215. Do you know whether the company refused to collect it some time ago?—No, I never heard of it.

216. You have given evidence as to the effect of coal-mining on health?—Yes.

217. Where did you get the experience to lead you to give the evidence you have given?—From my own observations at the mine which I am connected with.

218. Your observations at the mine at Millerton?—Yes.

219. How long have you been there?—Two years and a half.

220. Was this evidence in connection with the men working underground or on the surface? Did you intend your evidence in connection with the effect of coal-mining on health to be understood to deal with men working on the surface and underground, or the latter only?—I said that our mine was a healthy one to work in.

221. Do you consider coal-mining a healthy occupation?—At our mine it is.

222. Do you know anything about it generally—the general effect on health throughout the colony?—I have not been anywhere other than the mine I am at.

223. So that as to the effect of coal-mining on health generally in New Zealand you do not say?—No, I do not say.

224. You told Mr. Bennet that your coal-hewers made about 19s. a day?—Yes.

225. Is all your coal-hewing done by day work?—By the ton.

226. Is there not a scale of payment laid down by the Court?—Yes; the price was fixed by the award for producing coal by hand labour.

227. What wages do you pay under the award if coal is got by day work?—Twelve shillings a day if a man is put on to shift work. He is paid 12s. a day if he is taken off the coal-cutting to do any shift work. Suppose, for instance, we come to a fault and want a place driven to go through the fault.

228. But the man is not getting coal then?—There may be coal in it. The fault may not take all the coal out. If we put a man in to work there we pay him 12s. a day.

229. That is under the award of the Court?—Yes.

230. Supposing you work altogether by day wages, are there no wages specified in the award that you have to pay the men?—If a coal-hewer is taken off to do shift work he is paid 12s. a day.

231. Do you know, Mr. Fletcher, whether, during the two years and a half that you have been at Millerton, the price of coal-hewing has gone up or down?—Yes. Our hewing-rate was raised 1d. a ton eighteen months ago.

232. Have you ever known of it being reduced?—No, not since I came to the company.

233. Do you know anything about it at Denniston?—There have been no reductions since I came.

234. But at any time?—I do not know what occurred before I came here.

235. Do you think the value of the Westport Coal Company's properties on the West Coast has increased or decreased?—I cannot answer that question.

236. I am asking for your opinion?—I cannot give it.

237. You do not know what the price of the company's shares is in the open market, do you?—That is nothing to go by.

238. I suppose it is not convenient?—I had it read to me yesterday: £7 2s. for sellers, I think it was.

239. Do you never see the shares quoted anywhere?—No; we never get them down our way.

240. Do you know what the value of those shares was, say, seven years ago?—I do not know.

241. You do not know whether there is any depreciation in the value of the properties or not?—The depreciation or the increased value of the property has nothing to do with the selling-prices of the shares.

242. Do you think it has anything to do with the question at issue?—I do not think it has, because the shares can be £7 to-day and in three months' time £4 or £3.