the same." Now, the only practical variation is that the award being subject to "The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, 1900," is struck out in Mr. Colvin's Bill. The endeavour is to override the provisions and intentions of the Arbitration Act.

36. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Supposing you put it like this: suppose the award given in the case of the Taupiri Company varies in any way, and they have to come under the bank-to-bank clause, do you not think it would be fair and just if all companies came under the one law, because otherwise they would be working under a disadvantage, and this clause puts them all on a common footing?—My reply is this: that it is not desirable that all collieries should be working under the same law with respect to the hours of employment. There is a very great difference in the working of different mines and the conditions under which miners work. The Taupiri Mine is an exceptionally favourable mine for men to work in. There are high bords, splendid ventilation, and the conditions generally are most favourable. In some mines the seams are small and the ventilation not so good. After hearing evidence the Arbitration Court might decide that in one mine the men should work eight hours, in another seven, and in another six hours, as the case might be.

37. That would be at the expense of the miners who would be working under bad conditions?—It is not a question of expense, it is the condition under which they work; the men would be entitled to equal if not more pay. But this is the point: that if you are going to lessen the time the men shall work under contract underground, then you are going to affect the whole of the company's operations. It will affect the working of the surface men and all the mechanical appliances in operation, and will seriously affect the output of the mine. Clause 2 of Mr. Colvin's Bill really amounts to a vote of want of confidence in the Arbitration Act.

38. *Mr. Colvin.*] The Arbitration Act has nothing to do with it?—That is the point. Your Bill practically says that the Arbitration Court shall not fix the working-hours in coal-mines—it overrides the Conciliation and Arbitration Act.

39. The Legislature is trying to regulate the hours of labour. Under certain conditions the Arbitration Court might decide that the men shall work six hours underground, but it could not go over eight hours?—The Arbitration Court cannot override an Act of Parliament, neither, in my opinion, should an Act of Parliament override the Arbitration Court.

THOMAS BALLINGER (of a deputation from the Employers' Federation) examined. (No. 2.)

40. *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Ballinger?—I am chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of the Employers' Federation, and president of the Employers' Association.

41. You have read clause 2 of the Coal-mines Act Amendment Bill?—Yes. We object to the Legislature interfering with the awards of the Arbitration Court—strongly object to it. If the Court makes an award we think the House should not try to regulate the hours.

42. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] And if the Court makes no award?—Well, the men are quite able to take care of themselves.

43. You mean the miners?—Yes, any workmen. They are not downtrodden in New Zealand like they are in other places. Take, for instance, the case of the drivers in Wellington, which is on the same lines as the point we are considering. The drivers had an award made in Wellington as to their hours of labour, and the Minister for Railways altered their working-hours by shutting the gates of the goods-shed at an earlier hour. The men cannot work now after half past 4 o'clock. What would be the effect if the coal-mines shortened the hours of working? It would increase the cost of production. And who pays for it? All the industries in the colony that use coal, and, therefore, the consumers. It comes right back to the consumer again, and we have been told about the increased cost of living. What is the cause of it if it is not the shortening of hours, increase in wages, and combination?

44. You are representing the consumer now?—Yes. I do not know anything personally about coal-mining.

45. You are representing the combination of employers?—Yes. I will call Mr. Dixon, who is a coal-mine manager from the West Coast.

JONATHAN DIXON examined. (No. 3.)

46. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—Mining engineer and manager of the Westport Coal Company, at Denniston.

47. What have you to say with regard to clause 2?—I trust you will pardon me for reading some of my views. I will put the matter concisely before you. I believe the clause bearing on the bank-to-bank question should be deleted from the Bill in the best interests of the employer, the worker, and the colony generally. I might say, in connection with the Westport Coal Company's mines, the working-hours are set forth in the current award as eight hours at the "face," including meal-times (which is half an hour), and for work above ground eight hours, exclusive of said meal-time.

48. When was the award made?—I cannot say definitely, but I think it is in the fifth year of its existence. The working-time above ground—that is, for surface employees—is eight hours. I contend that the periods now worked in each shift are reasonably fair, and the demands of the workers' representatives to have such periods shortened by at least fifty minutes by legislative enactment do not appear to admit of equitable adjustment as between employer and workmen when the matter is seriously considered in all its phases. Such a demand should only receive statutory consideration, and justly so, were it conclusively proved that the present hours of work resulted in physical disability to the workmen. I claim that no just evidence can be adduced proving that underground workmen suffer in any such way under the conditions of coal-mining given effect to in accordance with the provisions of the Coal-mines Act of this colony. Seven hours and a half is not too long a period in twenty-four hours to require the exercise of a workman's productive power. It is not excessive, and in the matter of length of time can not be proved to