

be indirectly paid resulting from its shipment and final delivery to consumer. The following is the import of coal into New Zealand from New South Wales—extracted from the annual reports of the Department of Mines, New South Wales: 1896, 127,883 tons; 1897, 152,342 tons; 1898, 178,798 tons; 1899, 170,725 tons; 1900, 207,428 tons; 1901, 246,984 tons; 1902, 244,033 tons; 1903, 270,276 tons; 1904, 245,302 tons; 1905, 288,077 tons; 1906, 151,868 tons. The quantity shown for 1906 is for the six months ending the 30th June, and is taken from the Customs return for that period at the Port of Newcastle—this shows an increase of 23,985 tons for said half-year over what was imported for the whole year in 1896—an approximate annual increase in ten years of 176,000 tons. In the first six months of 1905 (as per Customs returns), 144,114 tons was imported; in 1906 (similar period), 151,868 tons: increase for half-year, 7,754 tons. This heavy import of coal into a colony which is itself a coal-producer appears a matter for serious consideration by the Government, having in view the present and extended development in the near future of its coalfields. Nothing should be done which will jeopardize the industry. The following are some of the wages-rates paid per day at collieries in New South Wales, which are exporters into this colony of large quantities of coal; and, compared with those paid by us for similar work, they show a marked difference against us:—

	Some New South Wales Mines.	Westport Coal Company.
Engineers	11s.	16s. 8d.
Fitters	7s. and 8s.	10s. and 11s. 6d.
Blacksmiths	8s. 8d.	10s., 11s., and 12s. 6d.
Strikers	6s. 3d.	7s. and 8s.
Carpenters (foremen)	9s.	12s. 6d.
Carpenters	7s. 8d.	11s.
Bricklayers	11s.	16s.
Bricklayers' labourers	7s. 6d.	9s.
Engine-drivers (haulage)	7s. 6d. and 8s.	10s. and 11s.
Boiler-firemen	6s. 9d.	10s.
Screenmen	6s. 3d.	8s.
Screenmen-boys	3s. 6d.	Under 15, 3s. 6d.; 15 to 16, 4s.; and 1s. per year rise up to 8s.
Labourers	5s. 8d. and 6s. 6d.	9s.

If the bank-to-bank clause be enforced, and the travelling-time be as agreed by the union representatives and those of the company when the Court was sitting in Westport—viz., twenty-five minutes each way—then operations would be adversely affected over £20,000 if rates and wages had to remain as now. Lessened hours which would have to be paid for, some £8,900; restricted output and consequent increased cost of production, over £14,000: total, £22,900. The total number of employees at date, including managers and staff, is 1,025. The operations of the industry are not continuous, and the coal-hewer has a large number of "play-days" during a year, which are arranged. The maximum time it is possible to work is as follows: Award holidays, 9; Sundays, 52; idle pay-Saturdays, 26: total, 87. [And 365—87 = 278 possible days. There are thus eighty-seven days as a minimum on which the mines are idle. Leaving out the Sundays, there are thirty-five days' idleness of the workman's own seeking. It is fallacious to contend that any diminished output resulting from a further shortening of hours could be made up by putting on more men. The coalfield is so disrupted and broken that it does not admit of development for such purpose—in fact, it requires extraordinary, what might be aptly termed abortive, development to keep pace with ordinary requirements for working-places, whereby anything like a uniform output can be maintained. The seam is not continuous, and the too-oft thinning-out of the seam, and total absence of same in many directions in the mines, are satisfactory proofs to any one having a knowledge of coal-mining that but limited operations can proceed and be maintained. This extraordinary difficulty in the way of uniform development has been the experience in the West Coast coalfields, of Tyneside, Wallsend, Coal-pit Heath, Brunner, Seddonville, Point Elizabeth, Millerton, and Denniston Mines. The seam cannot be developed in a manner whereby at will extra men could be employed to maintain an output decreased by shortened hours of work. Even were it possible to do so, the restricted output per man at once increases the working-charges per ton. It is sophistic argument to contend this will get over difficulties and keep normal the cost of production. In my opinion, the Arbitration Court should be the tribunal to determine the working-hours at mines. The Court is charged with power to determine all else. The Court hears detailed evidence *pro* and *con*, and should therefore be the authority best fitted to equitably determine what shall or shall not be.

49. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] In giving us the cost of production of coal in Newcastle and the wages, showing the increased cost here, you left out, of course, the cost of living here. A return of this kind is worth very little unless you give the whole facts. We know that the cost of living is not the same on the West Coast as it is here. The only question in reference to clause 2 that I want to ask is this: Have you ever heard any of the men say that they would be content to risk a reduction of wages if they got a reduction in the number of hours worked?—I might say that I have not heard it directly said by any of the workmen, but it has come from the union, and it was put in evidence before the Committee last year by the president of the union that he would prefer that clause and let things find their own level. With regard to the cost of living, I have resided on both sides in the Southern Hemisphere, and can say that the cost of living in New South Wales is not very much different in regard to edibles. The cost of boots and clothing is greater here. Some statements have been made that the cost of living has gone up 50 per cent. in a few years here, but I say No to that, unless people buy their goods at different shops from