

78. Do you not think that when all the companies in the colony do very well the men should participate?—The men get a fair equivalent for their labour now. They get higher wages at Westport than are paid in any other part of the world.

79. Do the company pay anything higher than is provided for under the Arbitration Court award?—They get award rates.

80. I think you said the mine was under good ventilation?—Yes.

81. I suppose you could imagine that there are mines in this colony in which there is no efficient ventilation?—I am only speaking of my own mine.

82. I suppose you admit there is coaldust there?—Coaldust is not so serious to health as some people imagine.

83. I suppose you consider it is healthy to get your lungs full of coaldust: Have you read the report of the Coal-mines Commissioners at Home, in which they say they consider that six hours are quite enough for any man to work in a coal-mine?—Why?

84. Owing to the insanitary conditions. Have you or your company any objection to giving preference to unionists in your mine?—Strict preference, yes. But we have an understanding that when a man applies for work we state that it is with the union we make the arrangement.

85. You must necessarily be aware that the lives of all the men underground in a mine depend upon any one of them?—Yes.

86. Do you not think that under those conditions the men should know who are going into the mine?—No, I do not think so. The mine-manager, who is qualified, or he would not be there, is the proper man to say. He is hemmed round by all sorts of legal enactments and is liable to all kinds of punishments. He should decide, and not the union, the members of which do not understand many of these things.—The union should not be allowed to say which man is qualified and which is not.

87. Do you not think it would be increasing the margin of safety?—No, not in the slightest. I think it would be imperilling it.

88. You are aware that there are mining accidents from time to time?—Yes.

89. And sometimes those accidents occur through a man not knowing the effect of what he is doing, or because he is careless?—Yes; but the fact of the man being a unionist does not increase the margin of safety. The man might be a tailor.

90. But if a man did not know something about mining the union would not admit him?—How could the union judge whether the man was qualified or not? The man who is charged with the responsibility of carrying on the discipline and safety of the mine is the man who naturally should be in a position to say whether a man is suitable or not. We strive as far as possible, where a new man is put on the coal, to give him to a responsible man to be broken in.

91. Do you think a man who is starting to work as a collier should begin as an apprentice?—Yes, but we cannot get them.

92. By a good bank-to-bank clause you would get them. What do you think of the Arbitration Court and its working?—Any machinery that prevents strikes is a blessing to any colony; but the bank-to-bank clause you speak of would override the Court and injure the industry generally.

93. Are you aware that the arbitration award in your case is in its fifth year, and that the Court has refused to make a new award?—Yes.

94. Do you think an arbitration award should last for ever?—The conditions at present are satisfactory. There may be a time when a change may be wanted.

95. You get on very well with your employees, do you not?—Yes.

96. When the conditions are satisfactory do you not think you should meet one another?—We try to do that.

97. Do you not think that the Court, in not considering the bank-to-bank clause, put itself above the law of the country?—I do not see that. The Court said the award then in force should continue.

98. The Arbitration Court refused to act?—It did act.

99. But it has not acted in your case for five years?—If the Court, after consideration, says that the award shall continue I believe the Court is within its jurisdiction.

100. But Parliament is higher than any Court in the colony?—Yes.

101. When the law is applied to gold-mining, do you not think it is hard if it does not apply to coal-mining?—I have already given the Committee my views.

102. *Mr. Seddon.*] You say it takes on an average fifty minutes for a man to go to and from the "face"?—The day before the Arbitration Court sat the union officials and myself met and agreed that that would be a fair time to allow.

103. When was that decided?—In January or February, 1905, when the Court was sitting to hear our case.

104. *Mr. Macpherson.*] During these twenty-five minutes each way the miners are working for the company?—No.

105. Do they not have to carry their tools in and out?—They go in for themselves when on contract-work. A man who is on piecework is not working when carrying his tools.

106. If you had to send the tools in or bring them out, you would have to pay for that?—Yes, but a workman on piecework is not working when carrying his tools.

107. *Mr. Seddon.*] In your mine you are getting farther from the surface every day?—Yes. As you extract the coal you go further in.

108. Every day it is further for the miners to go?—Yes.

109. Where do the workmen live?—A good percentage of them live at Denniston.

110. How far from the mouth of the mine?—By the rope-road three miles, and over the county road three miles and a half.