

209. Are you aware of the number of tons per day each miner puts out?—I do not know the average, but I believe it is about 6 or 7 tons per day.

210. At 500,000 tons, the output would come to about 9d. per ton. That would be about one-eighth of the whole output per day. We have had it in evidence that at Tyneside it only costs them 7d.?—Yes; but Mr. Pilcher has explained that it does not affect him anything like it does us. The circumstances vary at different mines. We have a loss of fifty minutes per day per man, while Mr. Pilcher may have only five or ten minutes.

211. He calculates it at 3d. per ton. It is only the truckers and outside workers who would be affected?—We consider it would affect all our men, inasmuch as the output of the mine would be affected. The wages would be affected by the amount of the tonnage, but we estimate that if we work fifty minutes less there would be a considerable shortage in the production and the output, and we should lose the profit on the decreased output.

212. How many day-men are there employed at the mine?—About 120, I think.

213. The only men it can affect much are the truckers. The men working outside would not lose the 50 minutes?—They probably would. The men outside cannot work very well until the coal comes out. They would have to wait until the work in the mines commenced. As a matter of fact, it is going to affect them more than the miners.

214. I do not see on what basis you calculate the £20,000 loss?—We estimate it in this way: we know exactly what the men can do in eight hours, and it is therefore not very difficult to calculate how much the loss would be if they worked fifty minutes a day less.

215. Do you think it would take fifty minutes a day?—We cannot possibly get at it in any other way. It is only a reasonable assumption that the men would not work so much.

216. If the men claim that they can put out as much coal in the lessened time and have given it in evidence here, you think they are wrong?—I should doubt it certainly.

217. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Do you stick to the statement that you have 120 men and boys who would be affected by this clause?—I think so.

218. Supposing you had 240, what would the average wages be?—I suppose 9s. per day.

219. Supposing we make it 10s. per day, or £3 per week?—Yes. Seven hundred and eighty would be immediately affected out of the whole staff at Millerton and Denniston. There are 1,025 employed, including the staff, shift-men, truckers, rope-boys, all surface-men—also the timber-men.

220. You take it to be 780 men?—Yes.

221. And you have 1,025 men altogether?—Yes.

222. Do you mean seriously to tell the Committee that it takes 780 men to cover those working outside the mines?—A number of those men are coal-hewers, but are working on the machines.

223. Do you tell us that you have 780 men to deal with the coal?—No. There are 780 men on wages.

224. And these would be affected by this bank-to-bank clause?—Yes, inasmuch as the men who are getting coal and are not on the tonnage rate would have their wages affected.

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FRIDAY, 21ST SEPTEMBER, 1906.

WILLIAM PRYOR examined. (No. 6.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you appearing as?—I am parliamentary secretary of the New Zealand Employers' Federation. I have been asked to appear on behalf of the coal-mine employers of Otago.

2. You wish to make a statement?—I wish just to add to what has been said, and say that the Otago coal-mine owners object to clause 2 of the Coal-mines Act Amendment Bill for the reasons which have already been stated—that it will usurp the functions of the Arbitration Court. I would also like to put in an extract from a letter received from Mr. William Scott, secretary to the Otago (N.Z.) Employers' Federation.

3. *Mr. Colvin.*] Have you the authority of the coal-miners themselves—the working-miners—to say they object?—No; I have nothing to do with the workers—I am speaking on behalf of the coal-mine owners. Mr. Scott's letter is dated the 14th September, 1906. The extract is as follows: "With regard to the withdrawal of the coal cases in Otago, all I can say in connection with the matter is that a conference was held composed of representatives from the employers' and workers' unions, and, after going fully into the matter, it was shown that to alter the present conditions in any way meant a new award and the bringing into operation of the bank-to-bank clause. The employers pointed out that if the working-hours were to be reduced in accordance with the bank-to-bank clause they would be compelled to insist upon a corresponding reduction in wages. The men were frightened to risk this matter, and consequently preferred to leave well alone and to work under the existing conditions. I need hardly point out that, although this condition is satisfactory to a certain extent, yet the provision bringing in the bank-to-bank clause in connection with any new agreement or award is in the meantime an effectual bar to any alteration being made in the present conditions of work, &c. We want more than the preventing of the bank-to-bank clause being made operative. We must insist upon the present clause being struck out altogether, so as to enable new conditions to be arranged for by either party without the consequences that would now ensue." That puts the matter in a nutshell, and explains the position with regard to the withdrawal of the men's demands from the Arbitration Court at the present sitting of the Court at Dunedin. I am also advised by Mr. Scott that at this meeting the employers met the workers and went through the decision of the Arbitration Court given at Westport, and discussed the matter at length. The decision came to was that these men were not prepared to accept the