

50. Have you had any cases before the Conciliation Boards?—Unfortunately, the Conciliation Board never sits in Westland now.

51. Have you ever had a dispute before the Conciliation Board?—No. It has been out of existence ever since I have been on the Coast.

52. Do you consider an employer has the right to dismiss a worker if he is not satisfied to retain his services?—I presume he has that power now.

53. Do you consider he should have it?—I do not see how you are going to take it away from him as long as there are workers.

54. Then, if an employer discharges a man whom he does not wish to retain, would you consider that victimisation?—It depends entirely upon what the circumstances are and the manner or conditions under which he was dismissed; also the causes which led to his dismissal—whether for incompetence, or anything of that kind. We cannot possibly prevent it. I have already stated that we cannot possibly prevent victimisation so long as society remains as it is at present.

55. Do you not consider that an employer has the right to dispense with the services of any worker who does not suit him?—Most decidedly not.

56. Why should he keep in his employ any man who is not suitable for his work?—If he is not suitable for his work I have no objection at all; but competent workmen have been dismissed simply because of their honest convictions which they have given publicly.

57. Have you known cases in which men have been discharged because of their connection with unions?—I have, of course.

58. For that reason only?—Other causes are always brought up. An employer would not say it was because of the man's connection with a union; he would raise some paltry excuse.

59. Take the men you are connected with: are they not members of a union?—Yes.

60. If the employers discharged a man he would be a member of the union, necessarily?—Yes.

61. Then, why should they give a reason other than unsuitability if they are all unionists practically?—Yes; but there is a lot of difference in the way in which they dismiss men for incompetency. In the case of coal-mining the men are on piecework, and are paid by results, and cases of incompetency are very few.

62. But, still, a man might not do his work satisfactorily?—It seldom happens in coal-mining, if a man understands his work.

63. There are a good many men who are not experts in coal-mining?—In such a case he would be discharged in a few days. The employers would not wait for months to find them out.

64. Where there is difficulty in getting men an employer has often to employ a man who is not so well qualified as he would like?—Not in that class of work.

65. In reference to the needs wage and exertion wage in the Bill, are you opposed to those clauses?—Yes.

66. You consider that all workers should receive the same pay?—I know this: that if you start that sort of thing you will have an awful difficulty. If all the men are working at the same thing they should get the same pay. With piecework it is a different matter.

67. If a man is paid by piecework he gains the advantage of his extra skill?—Not always.

68. Give me an instance?—In coal-mining. The amount of work is limited, owing to the limited conveyances or trucks for taking the coal outside the mine.

69. But while he is working he gains the advantage of either his extra skill or extra exertion?—There are only a certain number of trucks to take the coal out, and in a great number of instances the miners have to wait for hours on this account.

70. They would not be working during that time?—Certainly; they are there to do the work.

71. Do you consider it desirable that men should be paid in proportion to the work they perform?—No, I do not.

72. Do you consider that the greater the skill a man exercises, the greater the remuneration he should receive?—It is hard to classify the amount of skill.

73. Should a man who is more skilful and more energetic than his fellow-workers receive a higher wage by reason of his skill and energy?—No.

74. Are you in favour of piecework?—No, I am not.

75. You are wholly opposed to the principle of piecework?—Yes.

76. Then, so far as coal-mining is concerned, you would not fix a hewing-rate, but have every man on day-labour?—That matter was not brought up at the Conference. Personally I should favour day-labour, but the majority might not.

77. Are you personally in favour of miners hewing coal on a piece-rate?—No.

78. Under no circumstances are you in favour of piecework?—Speaking generally, I am opposed to the piecework system, because I know it means the overworking of men—abusing them, or abusing themselves.

79. But does not the man overwork himself, if there is any overwork in the matter?—I mean that extra exertion is put into the time he is at work, and the result affects his physical condition.

80. Are you in favour of men being industrious?—Yes; but I am not in favour of men killing themselves.

81. Do you consider that men can kill themselves by eight hours' work?—Yes, I can show you some cases.

82. *The Chairman.*] You mean by working up to their full reserve of natural powers, so that they have no margin to fall back on in a case of illness?—Yes, that is so.

83. *Mr. Alison.*] The Bill provides for special penalties in certain specified industries?—Yes.

84. Do you consider it is right that a body of workers, such as the tramwaymen, should strike suddenly and dislocate the whole of the tramway service, and put the public to great inconvenience and loss, without giving any notice?—I should say the workers—no matter what the industry—should have that right.