

138. Why did they not pay those when the money was lying in the bank? You pass your accounts at every fortnightly meeting in the union. The point is that the union deliberately by resolution paid away all the funds they had in their possession?—Not among themselves. They paid debts which had been incurred.

139. The one avowed object was that they would not pay the penalty imposed by the Court?—That is so.

140. Do you think a union should remain under an Arbitration Court award and still have the power to strike?—I think so.

141. A union has full power at the present time to register outside the Arbitration Act, and strike every day if they choose?—Yes.

142. Then, why did they not do that?—Because the occasion had not arisen.

143. During the last eighteen months we have had strikes in a few industries, and now, if the unions do not approve of the Arbitration Act, how do you account for the increase in the number of unionists of ten thousand in the year?—The members have increased where there is no Court.

144. Do you approve of the clause which cancels the registration of a union when it goes on strike?—My personal opinion is that when a union goes on strike its registration should be cancelled.

145. You want them to be able to go on strike, cancel their registration, and still have the employers bound by the award of the Court: is that an equitable contract? Put it in another way: Should not an award cease to exist when a union goes on strike, and should not the award cease to bind both parties when there is a revolt?—They do not revolt.

146. If you do not take advantage of the machinery under the Act it is a revolt against an award, or some portion of an award: is not that the position?—No, the position is this: The strike may have occurred entirely away from the award, and where we know the Court has made no provision for protecting us.

147. Would you not in such a case give the Court an opportunity of making provision?—As I said before, it is almost impossible to prove victimisation.

148. You say that an employer has the right to dismiss a man if he thinks he is not capable?—Yes.

149. I do not deny that men have been victimised, and it will be so to the end of the chapter—nothing can stop it. No law will compel a man to employ another or compel a man to work. No Court could protect you in that respect?—That is so.

150. With regard to the piecework system, you know what has been going on at Waihi?—Yes.

151. What is the trouble there?—Contracting.

152. All the men want to get contracts. The whole trouble is that the men working for the contractors were getting 11s. and 12s. a day, and the day-wages men were only getting 9s.; and the men have made arrangements with the company that the whole of the work shall be done by the contract system?—That is not so. The reason why the trouble took place—there was no strike—was this, as they tell it to me: There were certain men who could not get contracts, and the president of the union was one of them. The men who got the contracts were practically exerted—they were picked men—and the other men could not follow the pace.

153. The agreement made between the union and the Waihi Company is that the whole of the workers, as far as possible, shall work on the contract system?—That goes to show this: that if the contract system was general throughout the mine it would practically result in the same thing as day-wages.

154. Why?—Because the men would not exert themselves as they would if working on individual output. When the whole of them get into the co-operative system they will not kill themselves.

155. That was the trouble in connection with the Government co-operative works: the inclusion of incompetent men caused the others to become dissatisfied. You maintain that the Arbitration Act has not done anything to improve the condition of the workers?—No.

156. I suppose you have seen the return which has been issued showing every award of the Arbitration Court in every industry up to the present time?—No.

157. You will see by this that not only have the wages been improved, but the hours have been shortened and work paid for which was never paid for before. I understand that the wages on Denniston Hill have increased not less than 50 per cent. since 1894, when I went over on the first Conciliation Board?—You are a long way out. Some of the men are only getting 8s. a day now.

158. Will you deny that there are some men working at Denniston who are drawing £5 a week?—I believe some are.

159. Would you deny that the average wages for the whole of the Denniston miners is over £3 14s. a week?—That is for those actually engaged at the face. I take it that since the time you speak of coal has increased by 6s. a ton, and the price of living has gone up.

160. But would the cost of living have been different? Can we control the price of butter and meat in the Home market?—We can control it here.

161. We have to live on our exports, and cannot put on an export duty, because if you interfere with one product you must interfere with others?—I wanted to give my reason for saying that the wages of coal-miners had not increased owing to the award of the Arbitration Court. It is not the amount of wages a man receives which counts so much as the purchasing-power of the wages. Coal has increased 6s. a ton, while wages have remained practically stationary.

162. With regard to the purchasing-power of money, you know that you will always get for land a price based on what you can get out of it—that is, its productive power is the chief factor in the price of it?—It should be governed by that.