

tion to coal-mines. These matters are arranged and are governed by awards and agreements to suit local conditions. In connection with southern mining, there are mines where there is an agreement that the Saturday following pay-day shall be an idle day, and it is manifestly unfair to seek by such a measure as is proposed to interfere with the existing arrangements. I think no hard-and-fast rule should be laid down that a mine should cease work from 12 to 5 o'clock on the Saturday, and it would be unworkable from my own point of view. At many large mines it is necessary to load wagons from storage-bins during the hours from 12 noon to 5 p.m. on Saturdays for shipment purposes, and if this Bill were made statutory such work would have to be classed as urgent, and certificates obtained from the Inspector of Mines, and overtime paid in contravention of awards and mutual agreements. From a sporting standpoint such a measure would interfere very much with existing conditions. It is patent that the workers would prefer the full pay Saturday, or the half Saturday practically now universal, for purposes of relaxation from work or attendance at sports rather than a period of four hours from noon to 5 p.m. There is another important feature in connection with large mines, and that is that the exploitation requires a good deal of work to be done at times when the mines are idle, and the idle Saturday is taken as the time for doing a great deal of work in the way of special timbering, the extension of roads, and other work, instead of Sunday or Monday, and this enables sections of the mines to be kept in working-order for the resumption of operations on the following Monday otherwise a certain number of the employees would not be able to start work. There are often large jobs to be undertaken in connection with the larger mines which take both Saturday and Sunday to do, in order that the mine may be ready for operations on Monday morning. I think I have said sufficient to show that there is no necessity for this particular measure in connection with coal-mining.

3 *Hon. Mr R. McKenzie* ] Do your mines take the full holiday on pay Saturday?—Yes.

4. That applies generally?—Yes.

5 Except in connection with small lignite mines?—Yes. There is only one large mine that is working on the pay Saturday—that is the Blackball. Other mines take the half-day. In the North Island I think the Taupiri Coal-mines have acknowledged it by an award or mutual agreement.

6 If this Bill becomes law, in the majority of the mines it would mean, no work no pay?—That is the position; and it would materially affect agreements as to wages and other conditions that have been agreed to.

7 *Mr Colvin.* ] You give a full day once a fortnight?—Yes, every alternate Saturday.

8. Would it affect you in the loading of coal, seeing that you have a bar harbour at Westport, and get bad weather sometimes in the early part of the week?—Yes, it would affect us in connection with loading coal from the bins, and we should have to get a special permission from the Inspector of Mines to operate that particular class of work. I consider it is not fair to the industry to make such an interruption of four hours like that on Saturdays. Of course, the mines are not working on the alternate Saturdays, but the screen-workers as a rule work twelve days in the fortnight.

9 *Mr Anderson.* ] Does the State Mine give the half-holiday?—The State Mine gives every alternate Saturday.

10. Would this half-holiday prejudice small mines like lignite mines?—I think it would.

11 Would it interfere with the carrying-on of your business?—Yes, it would completely upset our arrangements. Present arrangements have been come to by agreements with the union, and embodied in the award.

12 Has there been any question raised as to the half-holiday?—Not to my knowledge. In fact, I know the unions are satisfied to go on as they are now going, and do not want this imposed on them. There is another feature requiring consideration, and that is from the sporting point of view. In connection with football, cricket, and horse-racing they would find that they had to restart work at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, just when they wanted to be off.

13 *Mr Duncan.* ] Is this pay Saturday every fortnight?—Yes.

14. Do the men get paid for that?—No, they forego payment for that.

15. What hours do they work in the fortnight?—They work eleven days. That is recognized as a fortnight's work in the mines.

16. Are they paid for eleven days?—Yes.

17 And the pay Saturday is an off-day altogether?—Yes.

18. For which they get no remuneration whatever?—That is so. If we employ the screen-men they are paid. Any one who works is paid.

19. *Mr Scott* ] In connection with the alternate Saturday being the pay Saturday and holiday, does that obtain generally throughout the Dominion in connection with coal-mines?—I think the figures I quoted show that it is practically observed now in the large mines throughout the Dominion. Many of the small mines would doubtless prefer to go as they please. They have no great amount of trade, and it would be hard on them to prevent them working on Saturday afternoons to earn a few shillings.

20. *Hon. Mr Guinness* ] You do know that there are several mines in the Dominion that give by mutual arrangement the Saturday half-holiday?—Yes, there are some down South.

21 In Otago particularly?—Yes; by looking up the awards you will find that that is the case.

22 Well, you tell us that these mines are able to give the Saturday half-holiday without inconvenience, and you say it would not be possible for your company to do so. I want to know how it is that the other mines can give the half-holiday?—I do not say it is impossible, but I say it would very materially affect our operations, and would seriously affect the workers. We should have to readjust our terms and conditions.

23. Could you not readjust them?—No; there are men who prefer to have the complete holiday.