

24. You have not come here as a representative of the workers?—I am representing the district I come from, and I trust I am putting before you gentlemen these matters in an equitable light.

25. Have you received a memorial or petition from the workers stating that they objected to this Bill?—No, I have had nothing but individual statements made to me. I have no authority from the union to come here and make these statements.

26. You say that it is impossible to work the mine if you give the Saturday half-holiday, especially in face of the fact of what is done down South?—The mines in the South are insignificant as compared with the other mines. They have an infinitesimal output. We have made special shipping arrangements on the understanding that pay Saturday shall be an idle day.

27. But all those arrangements could be readjusted?—Nothing is impossible, but it would materially interfere with the industries.

28. You think it would interfere with the rate of wages?—Yes, and it would be an inconvenient state of affairs. It would be an absurd proposition considering the nature of the industry.

29. When you work on Saturday, what are the hours you work?—The bank-to-bank hours.

30. What are the actual hours worked in the mine when you start on Saturday?—About six hours and a half in one mine and about seven hours in the other.

31. I want you to give me the hours at which you start and knock off on the Saturday?—We start at half past 7 at Denniston and work till half past 3, and at the other mine we start at 8 and knock off at 4.

32. Then, if you had the half-holiday, instead of working as you do now you would work four hours before 3 o'clock—that would be at 11 o'clock in one mine and at 12 o'clock in the other mine. Would that not be so?—Yes. We should have to knock off work at 12 o'clock and start again at 5 o'clock probably.

33. There would be no occasion to start at 5 o'clock—you do not do anything after 5 o'clock?—Yes, we do; in the shipping.

34. The number of men employed in the shipping is about 5 per cent of the total number?—More than that. I wish it could be reduced. There are something like 1,074 men employed in the Westport Coal Company's mines.

35. Would not 5 per cent. be able to look after the shipping arrangements on Saturday?—Yes, it would.

36. We provide for exemption in the case of urgent work?—Yes.

37. When you got a certificate it would last for three months or six months, or any time you asked for. Would not that meet your objection?—Presumably it would, but it would not meet other objections. If the working-hours were long the matter would have another aspect, but when we have the bank-to-bank clause in operation there is nothing to argue about in connection with the half-holiday as to the physical effect upon the men or in any other way.

38. *Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie*] How many men do you employ on repair-work when the men are out of the mine?—On some pay Saturdays we have thirty or forty men employed, speaking for Granity and Denniston, and that number is quite necessary to get certain sections of the road ready for Monday morning.

39. That is on ordinary work?—Yes, in the ordinary exploitation of the mine, and in keeping up the extension of the roads.

40. Supposing the men employed at brushing-work knocked off at 12 o'clock?—We should have to do that work on Sunday, and we avoid Sunday work as much as possible now.

41. *Mr. Anderson*.] The men have an arrangement with regard to the holiday?—Yes; I think it is in Volumes viii, ix, and x of the Awards. Many mines have an arrangement for an idle day.

42. Is that embodied in the awards?—Yes.

43. *Mr. Colvin*.] When does your present award cease?—Our award expired in April last year, and we are likely to come to a mutual agreement in the near future. We have been in conference, and I think we shall get a mutual arrangement fixed up without any difficulty within a very short time. During the recent negotiations in conference between ourselves the unions have not asked for any half-holiday, but for a continuation of the pay Saturday as it is.

WALTER LEITCH examined. (No. 3.)

1. *The Chairman*.] What are you?—Mining manager for the Blackball Company.

2. With regard to this Half-holiday for Miners Bill, what do you desire to say?—The last time we were at the Arbitration Court our miners—

3. How long ago is that?—About eighteen months ago. Our miners then desired to have the pay Saturday the same as at other mines, and we strongly opposed this on the ground that the Grey-mouth bar is of such a nature that you cannot trust it, and if you want screened coal you can only store it in wagons, and want to get it away for shipment as quickly as possible. If a steamer comes in on the Friday and you cannot load it until Monday the bar may then be bad and you may not be able to get the coal away until the week-end. We have had cases where the steamer has been delayed for ten days. The Court decided that we should work twelve hours on every Saturday—that is, a full shift on the front shift and the half-shift on the back shift. On Saturday the front shift started at 6 and knocked off at 2, and the back shift started at 2 and knocked off at 6. We had to discontinue the back shift because the men would not go to work on Saturday afternoon. They said it was not worth it. It was only when a rush came that we had to do it. Since then we have had to discontinue it. The men would not turn up for the half-shift. The miners are paid by contract, and it takes them half an hour to get to the face and half an hour to come back again, and I can safely say that 50 per cent. of the men would rather stop at home on Saturday afternoon. We had no trouble with the first shift, from 6 to 2. If you made it a half-shift on the first shift you would have just the same trouble. They would say it was not worth the trouble to go into the mine for a half-shift.