

CLAUDE POWELL examined. (No. 9.)

1 *The Chairman.*] What is your full name?—Claude Powell. I am a battery hand employed at Waikino.

2 You have heard the evidence of Mr Fagan and Mr Parry in connection with the matter We should like to get evidence from you with reference to battery hands?—So far as batteries are concerned, this Bill is of no use. A forty-four-hours week would benefit us at Waikino. We are at present working forty-eight.

3. Where does this Bill fail?—In the part “from twelve to five.” The men could be worked after 5 o’clock.

JOHN DOWGRAY examined. (No. 10.)

1 *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—John Dowgray

2 Where do you reside?—At Granity I am a coal-miner working at the Millerton Mine.

3. You hold some official position in connection with the Federation of Labour?—Yes, I am treasurer of the Federation of Labour. So far as the coal-miners are concerned, they are strongly opposed to the Bill in its present form. We do not wish to stand in the way of the gold-miners in their endeavour to obtain a reduction in working-hours to forty-four, provided they get paid for it. We have already had provisions made on the subject under our award. Coal-miners, generally speaking, work forty-eight hours one week and forty the next. Any alteration in that system would, I am afraid, meet with strong opposition from the coal-miners all over the Dominion. We are in favour of a forty-hours week. A forty-four-hours week is no good to the coal-miners. The Bill, so far as I am concerned, is a farce. I cannot see any good in the Bill at all. The name of the Bill is wrong to begin with, because it is not a “half weekly holiday.” The only thing I see in the Bill relating to holidays is that you shall shut down the mine for a given period. It does not say mining shall not engage a man’s full time—viz., forty-eight hours per week. The only feasible reason for shutting down from 12 to 5 is to get the mine clear of bad air. A man who is going to work at 5 o’clock at night is not going to attend any sports. The man that comes off the previous shift may go to sports. The Bill would only benefit the day-shift men in that respect. Of course Mr Guinness has withdrawn the proviso relating to where no wages-men are employed. I am strongly opposed to this part of the Bill. The only feasible reason for a reduction in the hours is for the sake of health. If the provision for coal-miners is struck out, and the provision for gold-miners is left, we do not mind in any way.

4. *Mr J C Thomson.*] Forty-eight hours one week and forty the next—that is a day for every two weeks. Are you satisfied with that?—We should like a forty-hour week if we could get it.

5. *Mr E H Taylor*] You prefer a full day on Saturday?—Yes.

6. *Hon. Mr Guinness*] You have taken the opinion of the miners that they do not want any alteration?—Yes, all the coal-miners.

7 We can withdraw any reference in the Bill to coal-miners, then. You say you now get this holiday every alternate Saturday. Do you get paid for the Saturdays you do not work?—Certainly not.

8. That part of the benefit of the Bill you do not want?—Your Bill does not say a man shall be paid. Reduce the hours, and the wages will regulate themselves by-and-by. That has been the effect in the west of Scotland, where I come from. They work five days a week and eight hours a day.

9. *Mr Colvin.*] It was said that when the bank-to-bank clause came into force it would reduce the output?—Certainly not. In some places it may have the effect of forcing the companies to put larger machinery in to increase the output.

10. *The Chairman*] It does not reduce the output per man employed. Your experience in Scotland, where they work short hours, bears this out?—Yes.

JAMES FISHER examined. (No. 11.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Do you wish to simply corroborate what Mr Dowgray has said?—Yes.

2. *Mr Scott.*] Do I understand you to say, Mr Fisher, that you prefer a Bill reducing the number of hours of work, rather than one providing for a half-holiday, as this Bill does?—We get the full holiday every fortnight. The men would not go to work for half a day. Some of the miners in my district have to walk four miles to work and four miles back. I should like the working to be five days a week.

*Mr Fagan* asked if they could take it that the Hon. Mr Guinness would withdraw from the Bill all mention of coal-miners.

*The Chairman:* Yes, that is so.

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