

men in the bottom heading have a good distance to go. And it takes a good bit longer to go right to the head of the tunnel.

133. So that some men are at a disadvantage as compared with others?—Yes.

134. How long does it take you to go from the tunnel-entrance to where you get off the trucks?—About fifteen or twenty minutes, I should think, perhaps fifteen minutes.

135. You want preference to unionists?—Yes.

136. You have told us the demands that you made on Mr. McLean. If all those demands were granted, we will say, with the exception of preference to unionists, do you think that your union, or the Federation of Labour, could supply Mr. McLean with a sufficient number of competent men—say, up to about four hundred—to fully man the works?—Yes, I think so. I think he would get plenty of men to work there.

137. But do you think the Federation of Labour would undertake to provide competent men for him?—We could not guarantee to supply men.

138. The Federation of Labour operates pretty well all over New Zealand?—Yes.

139. Could you not communicate with the other branches of the Federation and ascertain what men were available?—Yes.

140. And you would advise them to go to Otira if the conditions were made fairly satisfactory?—Yes, I think they would.

141. Under those circumstances, do you think the Federation or your union would be able to supply skilled work for the contractors up to about four hundred men?—Yes, I think they would get the men.

142. Where is the machine that you are working located—in the heading or outside?—My machine is at the top heading.

143. How long does it take the fumes to get out of the top heading after the firing?—We generally go down below and up the drive a bit, and wait for about twenty or twenty-five minutes.

144. I suppose you do not know how long it takes in the bottom heading, do you?—No. I have only worked a few shifts there.

145. Would the demands that you are making on the contractors very materially increase the cost of the work?—No, I do not think they would.

146. Do you know what percentage the increase would be?—No.

147. I mean as far as the working-wages are concerned?—I could not tell you exactly the percentage.

148. Do you know whether it was the practice formerly for the Government Engineer to define what was a wet place?—I do not know. I do not think it was.

149. Is it very wet where your machine is located?—We are driving along, and we shift our machines after every firing, and sometimes it is wet and sometimes we strike it dry.

150. It is necessary to widen the heading where you have the machine located—I mean, for the trucks to get past it?—We are above the trucks—right above them.

151. If the contractors were to meet you in what you considered a fair and reasonable way, do you think there would be any trouble with the men at the tunnel?—No, I do not think there would be any trouble at all.

152. *Hon. Mr. Fraser.*] Mr. McKenzie asked you just now whether, if the contractors conceded what you asked in regard to wages and other conditions, it would materially increase the cost of the work, and you said you did not think so. Did I understand you correctly?—It would increase the cost, I believe. I said I would not care to pass an opinion as to how far. We should be working rather shorter hours, and it would cost a little more.

153. I suppose that if wages are increased it must increase the cost of the work, must it not?—That is so.

154. *Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie.*] If the conditions were improved and the wages increased to what you consider fair wages, do you think the men would do more work than they are doing now?—Yes; I think they would do a little more and be more contented.

155. Did you have that in your mind when you said you did not think it would materially increase the cost of the work?—No, I did not think of that at the time.

156. If the conditions were improved and the men paid what you consider fair wages, do you think they would give a return for the extra cost by doing extra work?—Yes, I believe they would.

157. *Mr. Nosworthy.*] If these concessions that have been asked for were granted, do you think the Federation of Labour would guarantee the country that they would see the work through, or would there be any chance of another strike in another six months' time, or another appeal for an increase?—I do not think they would appeal for a further increase. But I am not one of the executive of the Federation of Labour, and cannot answer for it.

158. It is reported that you said to the newspaper reporter that you did not care for anybody or any Government—if you did not get what you wanted you were going to stop work. Has it struck you that what we are to take out of your statement is that this tunnel might be stopped?—No, not at all.

159. There is a danger of that, if the Federation of Labour is going to dictate too much—there is a danger of it, seeing that the contractors have lost money over the job. You are quite prepared to face that alternative? If it comes to stopping the tunnel the Federation of Labour will be responsible, if they take up the attitude which you say they are going to take up?—Yes, we are quite prepared to abide by what the Federation of Labour say.

160. You are quite prepared, if you do not get the increased wages that you are asking for, to see the tunnel stopped?—Yes.

161. *Mr. Seddon.*] You did not mean that as a threat?—No. I just stated the position as it was. In fact, there was a motion at one time to strike, and it was only by a little persuasion that we managed to stop it.

162. Since you have been secretary of the union, can you tell us how many men have come to Otira and gone away?—No. Many come, and we ask them to join the union, and they say