

To Mr. Hornsby: As to the conditions at Burnett's Face, the men and their families are there because that is as near as they can reasonably get to their work—three miles at the back of Denniston. They are in a little rock-bound valley; there is nothing there but bare rock. They build such houses as they can—such huts as they can afford. They have only one employer. I do not want to say anything against the Westport Coal Company as employers—they are a fine company; I rather admire them than otherwise in all their dealings—but the conditions are such that a man may quarrel with one of the foremen or deputies, and the man may lose his job. The solution of the matter is this: these people should live in a model town in connection with the industry, and they should be carried from their homes to their work. The condition of these men and their families under existing circumstances is undesirable for themselves and undesirable for the Dominion as a whole.

To Mr. Hudson: It is my opinion that it would be to the advantage of the worker if the coal-mines were nationalized.

To Mr. Veitch: The recent epidemic was very bad at Burnett's Face; in the district there were fifteen or sixteen deaths in a population of between twelve hundred and thirteen hundred.

To Mr. Luke: I think the people running the industry should provide proper homes or provide proper access to the work. The grade up the hill is very steep—I think it is $1\frac{1}{2}$ in 1; it is more than 45 degrees. As to remedying the existing undesirable conditions, my idea is to nationalize the mines—that is the remedy—nationalize the mines and you settle the matter at once.

To the Chairman: My cure for the trouble is the nationalization of the mines. At present the Government is not in a fair position; they have to compete and show returns. I would not expect them under present conditions to be any better than a private employer: they work on the same lines. In regard to State control and the delay in the construction of the railway-line, my reply is that they all make mistakes and are slow at times. The miners are going to be a big trouble in this country unless something is done. I cannot say what the ordinary wages of the miners are. I believe some miners are making 30s. a day, but they are taking big risks—working in pillars where they are in grave danger; but there are many who are not making anything like a living-wage. It would be fair to charge the men a reasonable rental for their homes.

To Mr. Craigie: A contractor would finish the work far quicker than the present Government. The miners are a community in a state of unrest, and you have to find a solution for that unrest. The general workers outside are not under the same conditions as the miners, and unless you find a remedy for the unrest of the miners, and find it early, you are going to have an upheaval of all labour; you have got to face that.

A. C. COTTRELL, Solicitor, examined.

I wish to bring before the Committee the possibilities of the cement industry in this district. At Cape Foulwind, about six miles from Westport, there are large deposits of limestone, extending over an area of some 400 acres. This limestone has been proved to go to a depth of 80 ft., and there are millions of tons of it. There are also adjacent large quantities of marl, the other ingredient chiefly used in the manufacture of cement. There is quite sufficient marl to equal what would be required to manufacture cement from the whole of the limestone in that district. The limestone is at present only being used to a small extent in burning lime—an industry that is being carried on by the Buller County Council. The burnt lime is used by farmers on their land. The manufacture of cement could, I believe, be taken up and would prove a very essential industry. There is a suitable place for cement-works adjacent to a railway running from Westport to Cape Foulwind, and the product could be marketed very easily. I hand in an analysis of the limestone and marl, made by Mr. Lovell, Director of the Westport School of Mines, showing that it contains in large quantities the most essential ingredients for the manufacture of cement. This country was also gone over by Mr. Morgan, Government Geologist, and his statement in regard to it can be found in the report he furnished to the Government.

To the Chairman: The deposit of lime is within six or seven miles by rail of Westport Harbour. The depth of water available at Westport is 27 ft. or 28 ft. The capital required to establish works to be worth while would be fairly expensive in order to provide the necessary machinery for cement-works. At the present time cement is largely used for ferro-concrete work and bridges. There would be a heavy demand throughout New Zealand and Australia. I know there is a tariff against cement in Australia. I believe there would be a sufficient demand in New Zealand alone to warrant opening up works there.

To Mr. Hornsby: I have not heard of any other ores being discovered there, except the ingredients—silica, alumina, iron-oxide, and so on. In the limestone the percentage of lime is 53.10, and after burning it was 92.04. The percentage of silica is 54, and after burning 62.

To Mr. Sidey: I should like the Committee to bring before the Government that such an industry could be opened up if the demand warranted it. I do not suggest any Government assistance in the establishment of the industry. I think that if the demand was sufficient the Government might open up the deposit. I am not speaking for any syndicate. I am only speaking of an industry that could be taken up by the Government or by private enterprise.

To Mr. Forbes: The cement would have to enter into competition with private concerns now existing, and I believe the ingredients are so good it could easily enter into any competition. I could not say that the ingredients are better than those at Golden Bay.

To Mr. Craigie: A great deal of the land where the deposit is to be found is held by small farmers. To work it as a private enterprise more capital is required than we can find in the district.