

(13.) Engine-drivers and wheelmen: In regard to these, as in other cases he had mentioned, there was no dispute, as the rate demanded was that already paid, but in this as in other cases they wanted to insure the retention of the wages at the existing rate.

(14.) Blacksmiths: These were in the same position.

(15 and 16.) Brace- and chamber-men: They sought to increase their wages to £3 10s. Their duties required constant care and attention. On them was the responsibility of lifting and letting down the men who went below as well as the timber, tools, &c., and what would happen if they were careless in their duties could be imagined. Moreover, with crushing on a large scale they would be kept continually occupied.

(17.) That the working-hours of miners be forty-six, from surface, per week. The manner in which miners were at present worked was not creditable to a Christian community. Men had to cease and commence work on Sunday. What they wanted was really two hours less on Sunday, and in this respect they were only seeking what the law of the land compelled for workers in factories and shops. There had been a time on this field—when directors were generous and liberal-minded—when this privilege was allowed the men, but of late, since the dispute had arisen, it was taken away. It was really Sunday now before a man could leave a mine, and, in order to be at his work, he had to enter the mine while it was still Sunday. They were asking nothing unfair or unprecedented in this. They only sought to revert to the old custom, and what the law provided in respect of factory-labourers and shop-assistants.

(18.) That where the mine exceeds 250 ft. in depth the company shall at all times lift the men, and keep a man on the brace while the men are working below: This was to prevent the great evil of climbing ladders. It was not reasonable to expect men to climb hundreds of feet of steep ladders when exhausted after a hard day's toil.

(19.) That all contracts under 100 ft. be abolished for driving, sinking, or rising, and that no contract be let for breaking out quartz: It was impossible on this field, where the width of lodes varied so frequently, to give a correct estimate of the value of driving, consequently tenderers had to guess. The men had been badly treated by the Consolidated Company who had taken contracts. Some of them had been knocked off who were doing well out of their contracts. If the lode narrowed down the position was that the battery could not be kept going, and, though this would be no fault of the contractor, he would be fined. If, however, the lode did not narrow, but widened, the contract was cancelled.

The Chairman said this was a serious statement. He would like proof.

Mr. Betts said that, if the companies denied what he said, proof would be forthcoming, if not before this Court before a higher one.

The Chairman could not see the use of dealing with the matter at all if Mr. Betts had a pre-conceived determination to appeal.

Mr. Betts said proof would be obtained if need be. No contract could be honestly and consistently estimated, for the reason he had given; men would be simply led astray by a good face of stone.

The Chairman could not see, therefore, the force of a 100 ft. limit.

(20.) That two delegates, appointed by this association, be allowed to inspect the mines, &c.: This was allowed under the Coal-mines Act. They did not ask to have it provided for by law if an understanding could be arrived at.

The Chairman said he would prefer to see it provided for by law, if it was necessary. He would take note of it, in view of the fact that an amending Mining Bill would probably be submitted to Parliament; but was there not already an Inspector of Mines?

Mr. Betts said they had no fault to find with the Inspector, but he had more work than he could attend to. Their parliamentary representative had asked that another Inspector be appointed, but so far it had not been done.

(21.) *Re holidays*: The union wanted the Christmas holidays, from Christmas Eve to New Year's Day, both inclusive, also Good Friday, Easter Monday and Tuesday, the Queen's Birthday, and the union anniversary. These holidays were being adhered to still, but they wanted to secure them.

(22.) *Re a week's notice*: This was fair for both sides. At present a company had the power to take a man to a mine, and, after he had taken out provisions, discharge him immediately.

The Chairman: Suppose a man proved incompetent?

Mr. Betts: Perhaps he would be put for a week at some work for which he was fitted. He had known, however, of competent men being discharged and incompetent men put in their places.

(23.) *Relating to Sunday labour*: They had inserted this clause because of trouble in the North over Sunday labour, and they merely wanted to safeguard the district against such a contingency.

(24.) That in all cases members of the union to have preference of work: Without this provision a union was of no use at all.

The Chairman said this was his great difficulty with regard to unions: Had not non-union men a right to live also? Were good men to be shut out because they did not belong to a union, while incompetent men were employed because they were members of a union? He believed the solution of the difficulty to some extent would be the fixing of a sliding scale with a minimum wage.

Mr. Betts said the union had no objection to a minimum wage being fixed, provided it was a living wage. No man in his senses, however, would say that 8s. per day was a living wage.

The statement of the employers was as follows:—

They were at present paying 11s. 8d. to shift bosses, but they objected to having the shift bosses classed with the men. They were really officers of the company who employed them. His experience was that the moment a man became a shift boss he left the union. Timber-men were also paid 11s. 8d. They were perfectly willing to accept the award of the Board as far as they were concerned. He wished to incorporate rise, winze, and shaft men, miners, and rock-drill men under one heading. They were all miners, and a man who could do one class could do the other, except with regard, perhaps, to using rock-drills; but this work could be soon mastered, and whatever difficulty there was could only be at the expense of the company. The wages for these men was 9s. 6d., except of the men in charge of the drill, who get 10s. Invariably they had to push rock-drill work as expeditiously as possible. The work in rises, winzes, and shafts was similar. The workers in shafts were given a bonus of half a shift. Only the best men were employed at this class of work, and they got the bonus as extra pay. Trucking was the only kind of work at which a young man could begin at once without preparation. With regard to battery-feeders, they were men who shovelled the ore and kept the stampers going, and the work was supposed to be one of the sinecures for old men; at any rate, they generally applied to him for that class of work. Men working in bad air were protected by law, and it was the duty of the Inspector of Mines to see that the law was carried out. His company had no bad air. According to the evidence of Dr. Whitton wet ground was often healthier than dry. Their pick-and-shovel men were allowed to work on all days if they wished. The fact of their not being able to do as much on wet days was the company's loss. The company only employed bushmen indirectly, and their contractors informed him that they would have to give up their contracts if they paid 12s. per day. The man in charge of a shift at the battery had no better opportunity of stealing amalgam than the man behind the battery. The work was not at all laborious, and was paid for at the rate of 10s. per shift.