

87. Do you know of any other case?—Not just now.

88. Was Hart conscious when brought out?—I did not see him until I got to Westport.

89. The other two cases you mentioned were very serious?—Yes.

90. Were they quite conscious when found?—Hedley was unconscious, but I do not think Hunter was.

91. Your representatives were allowed to go in and inspect the place where Hart was hurt?—Yes; they were allowed to go in the next day, and I believe, from what the inspectors say, that the place was standing exactly as it was when the lad was taken out.

92. When your men had examined this place with Mr Sowerby, did they report to the union?—Immediately.

93. Did you ask for an inquiry into it?—Yes; we asked the Minister for an inquiry about a week after.

94. Did you ask for an inquiry into this accident, or was it on the general complaints?—For this accident alone, and afterwards we asked the department to embrace the Mokihinui matter in connection with Beirne's case with it.

95. What reply did you get to your request?—After a time we got intimation that we could take the case before Mr. Hawkins, at Westport; but we were quite satisfied to have it under this Coal Commission.

96. *Mr. Lindop.*] You know that the Ironbridge section goes right through the hill, and that therefore there must be two entrances?—Certainly; but it is a question of complying with the Act.

97. *The Chairman.*] Do you think it would be better if the machines were withdrawn from the mines?—I say if machinery is good we should have it, but I am thoroughly of opinion that it is not good. It is neither good from the financial point of view or from that of the consumer's. The same quality of coal is not being produced by the machines, within 17 to 20 per cent., as that produced by the picks. I have travelled a little bit lately, and I am quite convinced that if the Commissioners go to the large centres they will find that the article is not so good. If evidence is taken from the engineers of boats they will also find the same there. The machines cannot keep the coal so clean as the miners can. If working on the rise, and the machine and bord is set on level, they strike the bottom before they get to their destination of the holing. If it is soft fireclay or soft stone in the bottom it is simply chopped or knocked up into small dirt, and goes away as coal. Again, if it is a bad roof, there is no way of keeping it up; the mullock has to go down amongst the coal. And the system of filling the coal by day-labour is not so clean or so beneficial to the consumer by at least 20 per cent. As regards these new people in the mine, what do we find? We find the tubs often coming out stacked with black stone. The man does not know the article he is dealing with, whereas, if he were a practical miner, he would, and would be ashamed to put out such stuff. If the machines were kept within the same bounds as the men—that is, in a place as narrow and the same height as the men—it would be impossible for them to pay. It is only by taking out places 9 ft. high, as against 7 ft. places worked by miners, that they can be made to return a profit. The work of shooting being done by wages-men who have not to supply their own powder, an extra quantity is used, with the result that the coal is broken and the ventilation is made worse. When I was in Christchurch and Wellington I made it my business to call on some of the coal-dealers, some of whom had invited me, and I was convinced that the article sent away was not so good as it used to be by from 17 to 20 per cent.

98. How are the miners interested in this?—The miners were more comfortable before.

99. How does it affect the miners if the company sell an inferior quality of coal?—The mine is now working twenty-four hours—that is, three shifts—as against eight hours. We say the machines are not paying the company, and the system of working is not so comfortable as the old system.

100. What business is that of the miner?—I can understand the objection to working the three shifts?—We say that the thing is not paying, so why do they not let us go back to the old system? Were the competition in the market as keen as it used to be, the present article would not sell.

101. Why do you want to go back to the old system? The only reason you give me is your objection to the three shifts?—If the machines are a profit to anybody we should have them, but they are not, in our opinion, and our homes are not so comfortable nor our work.

102. Are the miners earning less by the machines than they were by piecework?—I think there is not much difference. If there is any difference it would be a little less, but not much. Our miners are now getting from 10s. to 12s. a day—that is, day-labour.

103. Is there any strong feeling against the machines?—The only feeling is what I have told you, that in our opinion, they are not producing the article they used to do; they are not a profitable thing, and we would rather have the old system.

104. Do you look upon it as a serious matter?—Yes; it is not so comfortable in many ways as it used to be under the old system.

105. Wherein does the system differ, except that you have to work at night?—Well, we do not like it.

106. *Mr. Lomas.*] Does it make it more difficult or dangerous to have the bords taken more than the usual height?—Yes.

107. Does it make it more difficult to take down the tops in these high bords?—Certainly.

108. *The Chairman.*] What is the height you can work with a machine?—The machine has nothing to do with the working of the coal except the holing of it.

109. Does the company not get more coal?—I do not think so; not for the quantity of men as compared to the old system.

110. *Mr. Lomas.*] In your judgment, is more coal lost in taking out the pillars in the system adopted under the machines than under the old system?—In my opinion, Yes; and it is more dangerous.