

403. Do you think that shortening the hours of work underground would be beneficial to the miners' health?—I think so. I think that eight hours underground from bank to bank is long enough for any man to be underground.

404. What is about the time that the miners are underground now according to the present law?—At our mine the average, I suppose, would be about—close on nine hours. At some of the places it would not be so long, because some places are nearer to the outcrop than others, consequently some men have to go further than others.

405. What time does it take at the Denniston Mine now to go from the surface to the face?—In our award we made arrangements that the miners should be eight hours at the face, including crib-time, and they should walk in and out in their own time, in order to work under the present law that is in vogue. I consider that if this Bill becomes law the miners will be in the mine at the very least, taking it all round, long and short, half an hour less.

406. Including crib-time?—Including crib-time.

407. Can you give the Committee any information as to whether a miner, though he had his time shortened by half an hour a day, we will say, could win the same quantity of coal in the lesser time?—Yes. My experience of coal-mining is this: A coal-miner can do all that is in him in seven hours. He can do his work comfortably in seven hours. I do not think there is anything gained by keeping a miner in the mine too long.

408. Do you mean to say that a miner can do in seven hours as much work underground as if he is at the face eight hours?—I do.

409. When do the miners feel the inconvenience of the length of work?—Sometimes a miner cannot get the work done because he cannot get trucks; but if the trucks are there he wants to get them filled, and after he has been at it seven hours he has had enough. I may say that before the Conciliation and Arbitration Act came into force the miners in our district were at liberty to knock off when they had had enough, and the result was that some of them would go off at 2 o'clock after six hours' work, and from that time on to half-past 4 they would be going off. I may say that at that time the company placed men in different positions for months, taking the average time at which the miners knocked off, and brought it in as evidence before the Arbitration Court. But, unfortunately for the company, the Court did not uphold them, and gave us the old conditions.

410. What point did they wish to establish by that evidence?—That the miners did not stop in the mine for eight hours. We were asking for an increased price, and they were wanting to prove that we did not stop in the mine for eight hours. They were bringing this evidence to prove that if we stopped the eight hours we could make more money.

411. You answered that by saying that the miners were worked out before the expiration of eight hours?—Yes; that they were satisfied.

412. If the passing of this Bill had the effect of lessening the wages, in your opinion would the miners be prepared to support the measure?—I think so; but I do not think it would have the effect of lessening the wages at all.

413. Have you had any experience of quartz-mines?—I have.

414. Have you worked in them?—Yes, for about ten years.

415. When you were working in a quartz-mine was it the general custom to have a half-day's holiday on Saturday?—No, it was not.

416. Are any special preparations made in the work on the last day of the week for, so to speak, fixing up the faces?—Yes; there is always special work carried out on the last day of the week, because the mine has to stand idle for twenty-four or thirty-six hours.

417. The special work is to secure the faces?—Yes.

418. Would Saturday be a fair day to take to get an average of the amount of quartz mined rather than Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday?—Certainly not.

419. Why?—Because if there is any extra work, or anything of that to be done, it has to be done then.

420. A miner's time for getting quartz out is reduced, then?—Yes.

421. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Have you got any coal-cutting machines at your mine?—There are about forty men working on the machines. The machines work three shifts.

422. Do you mean forty on each shift?—No; from twelve to fourteen each shift—forty altogether. Generally in the daytime there are very few machines working, because the back and night shifts are shutting down, and they fill up in the morning shift.

423. Is working a machine hard work?—Yes, it is; some of it is very hard work.

424. Is a miner worked out in seven hours and a half with a machine?—Yes; he has had plenty of it then.

425. Could the machine do as much in seven hours as it can do now in seven hours and a half?—Yes. I am of the opinion that the machine is the same as the miner in that respect. A man who is working a machine can do as much in seven hours as in eight.

426. At what number of hours do you put the limit of a miner in a decent mine? How many hours could he work before he is worked out?—I say, as I have said before, that seven hours is quite sufficient.

427. You think a miner can work seven hours without overdoing himself?—Yes, honestly and fairly working.

428. You think that applies also to the machine-men?—I do.

429. If other evidence had been given to us that a miner can work only six hours continuously, do you agree with it?—No, not altogether; I think seven hours a very fair thing.

430. Are the men working under an agreement at Denniston?—Yes.

431. For how long?—The agreement was for two years; it has about eighteen months to run from now.