

93. *Mr. W. Fraser.*] Are you aware that the Act referred to by Mr. Guinness has no effect on a mine which comes under the operation of an award of the Arbitration Court? There is a clause in the Act which provides that the Act should not have any effect in a mine under the operation of an award of the Arbitration Court unless the award had lapsed?—As far as I know, the working-hours of the Westport Coal Company's employees have been adjusted by an arrangement with the union. The present working-conditions are in accordance with the Act.

94. The hours are fixed by an arrangement between the parties?—No; by the Act.

95. *Mr. Lang.*] I would like to ask the witness whether the working-hours in the various mines mentioned are eight hours from bank to bank, including the meal-time?—No; I would not say that. The travelling-time is over and above the eight hours. The day's work is regulated by the haulage-rope. The haulage works eight hours a day, less the meal-time; the time the men take to travel into the mine and out is outside of that. They are supposed to be eight hours at the face.

96. What I want to know is whether the meal-time is included in or excluded from the eight hours?—It is excluded. There is no allowance for meal-time over the eight hours; it is included in the eight hours worked. The actual working-time is eight hours, less the meal-time—that is, seven hours and a half.

97. The meal-time is included in the eight hours?—Yes. Formerly, before the amending Act came into operation, in a single shift the time worked was eight hours and a half; now it is strictly eight hours.

98. *The Chairman.*] The men are underground eight hours, you say?—Yes.

99. *Mr. W. Fraser.*] What becomes of the half-hour lost in going to and returning from the work? Is there half an hour idle time between each shift?—I am speaking of one shift. Where there are two shifts the travelling-time comes out of the eight hours.

100. Then, there is half an hour stoppage of work?—Take the case of the Blackball Company, for instance: they start at 6 o'clock in the morning and knock off at a quarter to 2. That gives a quarter of an hour for the men to travel to the work. They change shifts at the face, and there is a quarter of an hour allowed for coming out. That is where two shifts are worked—i.e., sixteen hours a day. In my former answers I was dealing with mines where there was a single shift.

101. *The Chairman.*] Is it 6 o'clock when they enter the mine or go down the bank?—When they enter the mine. It is a few minutes before 6 when they enter it.

102. At what hour do the men leave the mine?—2 o'clock.

103. *Mr. Millar.*] I suppose the large majority of the men who work at the face are pieceworkers?—No. With the Westport Coal Company's employees it is chiefly day-work.

104. How long is it since they started that system at Westport?—A very considerable time. The filling is all done by day-work. The coal is cut by machinery. We have some miners working on piece.

105. Taking the coalfields of the colony as a whole, are not the majority of the men at the face on piecework?—No. Only about one-fifth of the coal raised is brought up by piecework.

106. Is that outside of the Westport Coal Company?—No; in the Westport Coal Company's mine.

107. I was referring to the colony as a whole?—In other parts it is all piecework.

108. Therefore, if this proposed amendment were brought into force, it would not affect the coal-mine owners to any large extent, with the exception of the Westport Coal Company, because the pieceworkers are only paid for what they do, whether they work eight hours a day or less?—It would affect all the companies, because their production would be lessened.

109. The trucking is all done by contract?—Yes.

110. Therefore it would not increase the cost of that?—It would increase the cost, because it would lessen the production.

111. But if the men are paid by contract they are paid only for what they do, so that if the output is reduced the cost is also?—Yes.

112. Consequently, taken all round, it would not mean a great increase in the actual expense of a company, beyond the loss of profit on the reduced production?—No, unless the day-men come in on that footing.

113. It would affect all the day-men to that extent?—Yes.

114. But, if that clause were put in subject to any existing agreement in the Arbitration Court, do you not think that when the matter again came before the Arbitration Court the Court would fix the wage in accordance with the number of hours worked?—Yes, it would come to that.

115. If this clause were put in subject to any existing award of the Arbitration Court you do not anticipate it could do very much harm?—No. It could not do much under an existing award.

116. Assuming that this clause were put in, that the amending Act should not come into force until the present awards have been reviewed by the Arbitration Court, in your opinion would it increase the cost of production?—It would certainly increase the cost of production even under the present award.

117. To the extent only of the loss of profit on a reduced output?—Yes.

118. And you anticipate that reduced output would be considerable?—It would be reduced very much.

119. What are the average hours that the miners work in the mines now?—They are inside the eight hours.

120. But are there many men on the West Coast who put in more than eleven days a fortnight?—They only work eleven days at the outside.