

306. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] You said that Robert MacNeill, who was president of the miners union at one time, was one of the men whom you heard say that this legislation was not wanted?—Yes.

307. Do you know whether he was balloted out of the union or not?—I believe he was beaten for the secretaryship.

308. Do you know whether he ever worked in a mine?—Yes.

309. Where?—I do not know which one. I believe it was at the Progress Mine.

310. As a matter of fact, is he not a farmer?—Yes; since his father's death he has been a farmer. Prior to that he was mining.

311. Was MacNeill mining when he was secretary to the union?—No.

312. As a matter of fact, was he not County Chairman at the time he was secretary to the union, or a member of the Inangahua County Council?—I do not think he was Chairman. He was a member of the Council.

313. Was he returned to the Council by the farming community—i.e., for Totara Flat—or for Reefton?—He was returned by the mining people.

314. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] Do you know the present secretary of the Reefton Union?—Yes.

315. Is he engaged in mining?—No; he has not done so for some years.

316. Could you say how long it is since he was actively engaged in mining?—To my own knowledge, four or five years at least, I should say. He was in the coal-carting business two or three years previously.

317. I suppose that a man who took an active part in getting the men shorter hours with the same rate of pay would be comparatively popular amongst a number of men?—Yes, of course.

318. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Do you think the present secretary of the miners' union would be likely to be employed by any mine-proprietors in Reefton while he was secretary to the union?—I should think so. I have seen the mine-proprietors looking for men, and they would have been glad to get him or any one else.

319. They would not employ the secretary or the president of the union?—Yes, they would.

320. Have you known any former occupant of the position who was employed?—Yes; a man who stood against Mr. Betts for the secretaryship this year was not affected a bit.

321. Do you know whether the union object to the secretary working at mining?—No.

322. *The Chairman.*] Did you hear of the Waihi case, where the union officials were dismissed from the mine?—I heard of it, but I did not know the details.

323. Do you use rock-drills at all at Reefton?—None of the New Zealand companies use them, though some of the English companies do.

324. Have you been in any mines where rock-drills are used?—Yes; I believe they have them in the Golden Fleece Mine.

325. Are there dry places there?—Yes, sometimes.

326. Is there very much dust from the rock-drills in the dry places?—Not from what I saw. The air seemed to be as good there as in any other part when I was in the mine.

327. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] Do you do dry crushing or wet crushing?—Wet crushing.

328. Have you ever adopted dry crushing at all?—No.

329. Have you any knowledge or experience of dry crushing?—None at all.

330. *Mr. J. Allen.*] I understood you to say that the effect of this proposed legislation being carried would be to increase your cost by one-fifteenth?—I did not say that. I said that the cost would be increased by from 10 to 15 per cent.

331. On one shift or on three?—On the expenses for the year.

HENRY BETTS recalled. (No. 16.)

332. *Mr. Guinness.*] How long have you been connected with the miners' union of Reefton?—I have been connected with the last one since its formation, six years ago.

333. How long have you been the secretary to it?—This is my third year. I was president for two years before taking the position of secretary.

334. Has the request for this bank-to-bank clause been under the consideration of the miners for any length of time; and, if so, for how long?—It has been under the consideration of the miners for the last six years—ever since the union was formed—and, as a matter of fact, has always been placed on their order paper as one of the items to be discussed at the Trades Council Conferences held in one of the large centres annually. At the last Conference held in Auckland it was discussed, and a resolution was carried at that Conference at the instigation of the Westland Trades and Labour Council, with which our union is connected.

335. What was the resolution?—That a clause be inserted in the Mining Acts—Coal and Gold—providing that a man should not be employed underground for a longer period than eight hours, including meal-time, on five days a week, nor more than four hours on Saturday.

336. You say the matter has been on the order paper for six years?—Yes.

337. Do you mean that the miners adopted a resolution urging that legislation be passed in the direction of the Bill, or do you mean that it had not been decided what they would urge on the point?—It had been decided by our union to urge that legislation be passed—most decidedly.

338. For the last six years?—Time after time—year after year.

339. Do you know that candidates for Parliament have been asked to support that proposal for years past?—Yes, I believe they have. I am certain that you yourself have been asked.

340. Do you know Mr. Free, of Reefton, a solicitor and an attorney for several companies?—Yes.

341. Do you know Mr. Kingswell, the legal manager of several companies, and also a mine-proprietor?—Yes.