

shorter hours with lower wages. That seems to me to put the whole matter as concisely as possible. I would just like to say that the evidence before the Arbitration Court must have been very conclusive against the bank-to-bank clause for the Court to take such a step as it did, and that seems to be the opinion of the men when the matter is fully explained to them. They are not favourable to this bank-to-bank clause, because they recognise that it means a reduction of their wages and earning-power. The Arbitration Court proceedings at Westport are reported in the *Labour Journal* for April, 1905, page 262, where it is pointed out that a very great hardship would ensue if the bank-to-bank clause were to be put into operation. With regard to the statement that the companies could apply for a new award if this Bill goes through, I would like to say that I have no knowledge of any case where the Legislature has interfered with the judgment of a Court during the currency of an award, and I would suggest that there should be added to this clause, in fairness to all concerned, a proviso that if the shortened hours are adopted in any of the mines a corresponding reduction in wages should follow.

4. You would make yourself the judge?—No; if a man is paid so-much for eight hours and a half—say, 8s. 6d.—there would be no question of judgment at all: he would be then paid for eight hours.

5. *Mr. Macpherson.*] Supposing he is paid on a tonnage rate?—I suppose the companies would have to put up with the tonnage rate in the meantime, but it would make a very considerable difference if the wages hands were reduced.

6. It would make no difference with regard to the tonnage rate, but the lesser output would minimise the companies' profits?—Yes, that is going to make a very big difference.

7. But not so big a difference as was stated here yesterday?—I can only say that the Judge in the Arbitration Court accepted as approximately correct the figures of the Westport Coal Company showing in connection with the two mines at Denniston and Granity that the increase in the cost of production would amount to £22,000 per annum. I am using my argument from the point of view of the Judge's decision in the Westport case. In the *Labour Journal* appears the summing-up of the Judge and the result of the whole thing, and I think it is fair to assume that the Court was competent to come to a decision on the matter.

8. I do not dispute that for a moment. I have not read the report—I am simply referring to the statement that was made here by a previous witness?—The evidence in the *Labour Journal* will at once establish the fact that to introduce the bank-to-bank clause will mean that it is going to have a tremendous effect on the cost of production from the coal-mines.

9. *Mr. Colvin.*] You were here yesterday and heard Mr. Dixon give his evidence?—Yes.

10. You heard Mr. Dixon state that it would make a difference of fifty minutes a day to the company for each man if this Bill were passed?—No, I do not think he said that. I think he said there had been a conference on the matter between representatives of the miners and the company, and that they had agreed that fifty minutes would be taken up in going and coming.

11. They allow now twenty-five minutes. The men give twenty-five minutes and the company give twenty-five minutes?—I did not understand that to be the case. I understand it is eight hours and a half from bank to bank—the men and the proprietors are dividing the time. The point at issue is that the mines are being worked now on the principle of eight hours and a half from bank to bank, and this clause would make it eight hours from bank to bank.

12. *Mr. Herries.*] In the event of this clause passing, do you think a provision should be inserted providing that any employers affected should have the right to go at once to the Arbitration Court?—That is the difficulty—they cannot go at once. They would have to make application and meet difficulties, and it might be six months before it was heard. We hold that the Court is the only tribunal that is fit to make the award. In some of the mines the workings are at the entrance, and the eight hours provision would not trouble the owners to the extent of five minutes a day, while the working-faces in other mines are at a considerable distance; therefore we say that the Arbitration Court, being experts in this matter, should be the body to decide what the number of hours should be.

13. You would have no objection to the Arbitration Court putting it in and correspondingly reducing the wages?—No. We say the Legislature should not settle the hours in this way. The Court settles the hours in all other industrial matters, so why should they not have the same power in connection with the coal-mines?

14. You would have no objection to the Arbitration Court putting the eight-hours-from-bank-to-bank provision in their award?—No, because we should have to submit if they did. We have accepted their conditions before. We say it should not be put in the Act, but the Court should have a free hand.

15. You say the consequence of the bank-to-bank clause would be a loss to certain mines, and you point out that you would be paying the same wages for less work: supposing the men are willing to take lower wages in order to get this bank-to-bank clause?—We say that, taking the men generally, they are not willing to take less wages for the shorter time. We say that the increased cost of production would be so much that it would open the door wider for an increased importation of coal from Australia, and would detrimentally affect the industry.

16. If the wages are reduced, where does the increased cost of production come in? What other circumstances besides the wages would increase the cost?—If the wages are reduced sufficiently all round, then, of course, it would be all the same so far as the employers are concerned.

17. Then it is only on account of the wages that the employers object to this clause?—Yes.

18. What other increased cost is there besides the wages?—Well, if the time is shortened there will be less coal got, and the whole of the plant and machinery will be employed for a shorter period. They would not be able to get the same amount of work out of it because the same amount of coal would not be produced.

19. Do you estimate that at a large sum?—I have not estimated that.