

1910.
NEW ZEALAND.

GOLDFIELDS AND MINES COMMITTEE:

REPORT ON HALF-HOLIDAY FOR MINERS IN GOLD AND COAL MINES BILL; TOGETHER
WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

(MR. POLAND, CHAIRMAN.)

Report brought up on the 20th October, and ordered to be printed.

ORDERS OF REFERENCE.

Extracts from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

THURSDAY, THE 7TH DAY OF JULY, 1910.

Ordered, "That a Goldfields and Mines Committee be appointed, consisting of ten members, to whom shall be referred all matters relating to mining and all Bills relating to mines; with power to call for persons and papers; three to be a quorum: the Committee to consist of Mr. Anderson, Mr. Colvin, Mr. J. Duncan, Mr. Greenslade, Mr. Poland, Mr. Scott, Mr. Seddon, Mr. E. H. Taylor, Mr. J. C. Thomson, and the mover."—(Hon. Mr. R. McKENZIE.)

WEDNESDAY, THE 20TH DAY OF JULY, 1910.

Ordered, "That the Half-holiday for Miners in Gold and Coal Mines Bill be referred to the Goldfields and Mines Committee."—(MR. LAURENSEN, for HON. A. R. GUINNESS.)

REPORT.

THE Goldfields and Mines Committee, having taken evidence and bestowed careful consideration upon the provisions of the Half-holiday for Miners in Gold and Coal Mines Bill, referred to them by your honourable House, have the honour to report that they recommend that the said Bill be not allowed to proceed.

Parliament Buildings, Wellington, 20th October, 1910.

H. POLAND,
Chairman.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

THURSDAY, 18TH AUGUST, 1910.

S. L. P. FREE examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am one of the attorneys of the Consolidated Goldfields of New Zealand at Reefton.

2. You desire to make a statement with regard to the Half-holiday for Miners Bill?—Yes, sir.

3. If you make a statement now we can afterwards ask you questions?—Yes. The proposal is to close the mines from 12 o'clock noon until 5 o'clock of the same day. I may say, first of all, that all our mines are working under an industrial agreement, of which I have a copy here—an agreement which was entered into on the 1st July last for a period of three years—and the arrangement as to hours is this: that the working-day shall consist of eight hours under the bank-to-bank clause—that is, taking the time off of lowering the men and lifting them out of the mine, and also the luncheon or crib time; so that on an average the men work seven hours a day: and it is also agreed that the night shift following Sunday shall go on at 1 a.m. and cease work at 8 a.m., so that they are only seven hours underground. The afternoon shift on Saturday goes on at 3 p.m., so that the day shift has seven hours underground, giving us about six hours' work. The afternoon shift goes on at 3 p.m. and ceases at 10 o'clock, and they are only seven hours underground, which gives us six hours' work. That is the arrangement which was made and entered into on the 1st July last for three years. This agreement covers not only our own mines, which are the Wealth of Nations, the Progress, and the Blackwater, but also the Keep-it-Dark and the Big River Mines—in fact, all the larger operating mines in the district. I will hand you a copy of the agreement, which can be referred to by the Committee if necessary. If this law comes into force it will probably mean that no work will be done in the mines after 8 o'clock on Saturday morning, unless it is made clear that for the half-shift work until noon only half-shift wages shall be paid. You can understand that if you are dealing with quartz which only yields 10s. a ton it will not pay you to take it out if you have to pay double wages for the half-shift, and the probability is that in most of the mines it will not pay you to take out the quartz at all. There is therefore the probability that the shift would not be worked at all. In any case it would mean that the mine would close down on Saturday at noon, and the night shift would not go on. The reasons for this must be obvious. The agreement we have with the miners is that they go on at 3 o'clock and knock off at 10, and if they cannot start until 5 o'clock and then knock off at 10 they are only working a five-hour shift; and you must remember that the winding plant must be closed down at noon, and if you had to start your mine again to work five hours that it would not pay. The result of the Act would be one of two things—either the mine would cease work at 8 o'clock on Saturday morning or would cease work at 12 o'clock and not resume again. The first alternative would mean the loss of one shift a week, and the other alternative would mean that one shift would lose a day's work a week; or, in other words, they would lose one shift in three. The measure, as far as my companies are concerned, is believed to be unworkable, and not in the interests of either the workers or employers. I think that covers all I have to say.

4. Have you anything to say with regard to its effect on the batteries?—Of course, it would reduce the output by the amount of time lost, and it would in some cases—in connection with the smelter—mean that it could not be observed. But, there, I suppose we could get a special dispensation. At our Progress Mine there is considerable smelting plant, which has to be run continuously. If the Bill were operated strictly it would stop the smelting entirely. That is to say, if we were bound to close down the smelting from noon until 5 o'clock on Saturday the smelter would freeze; and you must keep your smelter going. You cannot close down your smelter—you must keep it going.

JONATHAN DIXON examined. (No. 2.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—District manager for the Westport Coal Company.

2. Will you make a statement also with regard to this Half-holiday Bill?—Yes. I consider the half-holiday proposal for miners to be absolutely unnecessary in regard to coal-mines, owing to the fact that the principle is practically acknowledged in connection with the industry at the present time. In proof of this statement I would quote from the statistics taken in connection with minerals and mining for 1908, also several awards in operation throughout the Dominion. In these we find that the total output of coal for that year was 1,860,975 tons, and the total number of persons employed in and about the coal-mines was 3,894. Now, the total tons raised at mines where it is known that the pay Saturday (that is, every alternate Saturday) is observed as a full holiday amounted to 1,344,039 tons, or 72.25 per cent. of the Dominion's total output. The persons employed at these mines numbered 2,466, or 63.3 per cent. of the total. The tons raised at mines known to observe the Saturday half-holiday were 161,619, or 8.7 per cent. of the total. The persons employed at these mines numbered 392, or 10.2 per cent. of the total for all mines. Therefore the number of mines referred to—which is a minimum, as there are doubtless more—that are at present complying with the requirements of the proposed Bill represents 81 per cent. of the total output and 73.5 per cent. of the total employees. Out of the total of some 182 mines there are 106 which only employ about 353 men, an average of some three persons per pit. Then there are about 19 private pits, which together in 1908 only produced a total of 667 tons. These facts would suggest that no hardship exists with regard to the Saturday holiday time with rela-

tion to coal-mines. These matters are arranged and are governed by awards and agreements to suit local conditions. In connection with southern mining, there are mines where there is an agreement that the Saturday following pay-day shall be an idle day, and it is manifestly unfair to seek by such a measure as is proposed to interfere with the existing arrangements. I think no hard-and-fast rule should be laid down that a mine should cease work from 12 to 5 o'clock on the Saturday, and it would be unworkable from my own point of view. At many large mines it is necessary to load wagons from storage-bins during the hours from 12 noon to 5 p.m. on Saturdays for shipment purposes, and if this Bill were made statutory such work would have to be classed as urgent, and certificates obtained from the Inspector of Mines, and overtime paid in contravention of awards and mutual agreements. From a sporting standpoint such a measure would interfere very much with existing conditions. It is patent that the workers would prefer the full pay Saturday, or the half Saturday practically now universal, for purposes of relaxation from work or attendance at sports rather than a period of four hours from noon to 5 p.m. There is another important feature in connection with large mines, and that is that the exploitation requires a good deal of work to be done at times when the mines are idle, and the idle Saturday is taken as the time for doing a great deal of work in the way of special timbering, the extension of roads, and other work, instead of Sunday or Monday, and this enables sections of the mines to be kept in working-order for the resumption of operations on the following Monday otherwise a certain number of the employees would not be able to start work. There are often large jobs to be undertaken in connection with the larger mines which take both Saturday and Sunday to do, in order that the mine may be ready for operations on Monday morning. I think I have said sufficient to show that there is no necessity for this particular measure in connection with coal-mining.

3 *Hon. Mr R. McKenzie*] Do your mines take the full holiday on pay Saturday?—Yes.

4. That applies generally?—Yes.

5 Except in connection with small lignite mines?—Yes. There is only one large mine that is working on the pay Saturday—that is the Blackball. Other mines take the half-day. In the North Island I think the Taupiri Coal-mines have acknowledged it by an award or mutual agreement.

6 If this Bill becomes law, in the majority of the mines it would mean, no work no pay?—That is the position; and it would materially affect agreements as to wages and other conditions that have been agreed to.

7 *Mr Colvin.*] You give a full day once a fortnight?—Yes, every alternate Saturday.

8. Would it affect you in the loading of coal, seeing that you have a bar harbour at Westport, and get bad weather sometimes in the early part of the week?—Yes, it would affect us in connection with loading coal from the bins, and we should have to get a special permission from the Inspector of Mines to operate that particular class of work. I consider it is not fair to the industry to make such an interruption of four hours like that on Saturdays. Of course, the mines are not working on the alternate Saturdays, but the screen-workers as a rule work twelve days in the fortnight.

9 *Mr Anderson.*] Does the State Mine give the half-holiday?—The State Mine gives every alternate Saturday.

10. Would this half-holiday prejudice small mines like lignite mines?—I think it would.

11 Would it interfere with the carrying-on of your business?—Yes, it would completely upset our arrangements. Present arrangements have been come to by agreements with the union, and embodied in the award.

12 Has there been any question raised as to the half-holiday?—Not to my knowledge. In fact, I know the unions are satisfied to go on as they are now going, and do not want this imposed on them. There is another feature requiring consideration, and that is from the sporting point of view. In connection with football, cricket, and horse-racing they would find that they had to restart work at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, just when they wanted to be off.

13 *Mr Duncan.*] Is this pay Saturday every fortnight?—Yes.

14. Do the men get paid for that?—No, they forego payment for that.

15. What hours do they work in the fortnight?—They work eleven days. That is recognized as a fortnight's work in the mines.

16. Are they paid for eleven days?—Yes.

17 And the pay Saturday is an off-day altogether?—Yes.

18. For which they get no remuneration whatever?—That is so. If we employ the screen-men they are paid. Any one who works is paid.

19. *Mr Scott*] In connection with the alternate Saturday being the pay Saturday and holiday, does that obtain generally throughout the Dominion in connection with coal-mines?—I think the figures I quoted show that it is practically observed now in the large mines throughout the Dominion. Many of the small mines would doubtless prefer to go as they please. They have no great amount of trade, and it would be hard on them to prevent them working on Saturday afternoons to earn a few shillings.

20. *Hon. Mr Guinness*] You do know that there are several mines in the Dominion that give by mutual arrangement the Saturday half-holiday?—Yes, there are some down South.

21 In Otago particularly?—Yes; by looking up the awards you will find that that is the case.

22 Well, you tell us that these mines are able to give the Saturday half-holiday without inconvenience, and you say it would not be possible for your company to do so. I want to know how it is that the other mines can give the half-holiday?—I do not say it is impossible, but I say it would very materially affect our operations, and would seriously affect the workers. We should have to readjust our terms and conditions.

23. Could you not readjust them?—No; there are men who prefer to have the complete holiday.

24. You have not come here as a representative of the workers?—I am representing the district I come from, and I trust I am putting before you gentlemen these matters in an equitable light.

25. Have you received a memorial or petition from the workers stating that they objected to this Bill?—No, I have had nothing but individual statements made to me. I have no authority from the union to come here and make these statements.

26. You say that it is impossible to work the mine if you give the Saturday half-holiday, especially in face of the fact of what is done down South?—The mines in the South are insignificant as compared with the other mines. They have an infinitesimal output. We have made special shipping arrangements on the understanding that pay Saturday shall be an idle day.

27. But all those arrangements could be readjusted?—Nothing is impossible, but it would materially interfere with the industries.

28. You think it would interfere with the rate of wages?—Yes, and it would be an inconvenient state of affairs. It would be an absurd proposition considering the nature of the industry.

29. When you work on Saturday, what are the hours you work?—The bank-to-bank hours.

30. What are the actual hours worked in the mine when you start on Saturday?—About six hours and a half in one mine and about seven hours in the other.

31. I want you to give me the hours at which you start and knock off on the Saturday?—We start at half past 7 at Denniston and work till half past 3, and at the other mine we start at 8 and knock off at 4.

32. Then, if you had the half-holiday, instead of working as you do now you would work four hours before 3 o'clock—that would be at 11 o'clock in one mine and at 12 o'clock in the other mine. Would that not be so?—Yes. We should have to knock off work at 12 o'clock and start again at 5 o'clock probably.

33. There would be no occasion to start at 5 o'clock—you do not do anything after 5 o'clock?—Yes, we do; in the shipping.

34. The number of men employed in the shipping is about 5 per cent of the total number?—More than that. I wish it could be reduced. There are something like 1,074 men employed in the Westport Coal Company's mines.

35. Would not 5 per cent. be able to look after the shipping arrangements on Saturday?—Yes, it would.

36. We provide for exemption in the case of urgent work?—Yes.

37. When you got a certificate it would last for three months or six months, or any time you asked for. Would not that meet your objection?—Presumably it would, but it would not meet other objections. If the working-hours were long the matter would have another aspect, but when we have the bank-to-bank clause in operation there is nothing to argue about in connection with the half-holiday as to the physical effect upon the men or in any other way.

38. *Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie*] How many men do you employ on repair-work when the men are out of the mine?—On some pay Saturdays we have thirty or forty men employed, speaking for Granity and Denniston, and that number is quite necessary to get certain sections of the road ready for Monday morning.

39. That is on ordinary work?—Yes, in the ordinary exploitation of the mine, and in keeping up the extension of the roads.

40. Supposing the men employed at brushing-work knocked off at 12 o'clock?—We should have to do that work on Sunday, and we avoid Sunday work as much as possible now.

41. *Mr. Anderson*.] The men have an arrangement with regard to the holiday?—Yes; I think it is in Volumes viii, ix, and x of the Awards. Many mines have an arrangement for an idle day.

42. Is that embodied in the awards?—Yes.

43. *Mr. Colvin*.] When does your present award cease?—Our award expired in April last year, and we are likely to come to a mutual agreement in the near future. We have been in conference, and I think we shall get a mutual arrangement fixed up without any difficulty within a very short time. During the recent negotiations in conference between ourselves the unions have not asked for any half-holiday, but for a continuation of the pay Saturday as it is.

WALTER LEITCH examined. (No. 3.)

1. *The Chairman*.] What are you?—Mining manager for the Blackball Company.

2. With regard to this Half-holiday for Miners Bill, what do you desire to say?—The last time we were at the Arbitration Court our miners—

3. How long ago is that?—About eighteen months ago. Our miners then desired to have the pay Saturday the same as at other mines, and we strongly opposed this on the ground that the Grey-mouth bar is of such a nature that you cannot trust it, and if you want screened coal you can only store it in wagons, and want to get it away for shipment as quickly as possible. If a steamer comes in on the Friday and you cannot load it until Monday the bar may then be bad and you may not be able to get the coal away until the week-end. We have had cases where the steamer has been delayed for ten days. The Court decided that we should work twelve hours on every Saturday—that is, a full shift on the front shift and the half-shift on the back shift. On Saturday the front shift started at 6 and knocked off at 2, and the back shift started at 2 and knocked off at 6. We had to discontinue the back shift because the men would not go to work on Saturday afternoon. They said it was not worth it. It was only when a rush came that we had to do it. Since then we have had to discontinue it. The men would not turn up for the half-shift. The miners are paid by contract, and it takes them half an hour to get to the face and half an hour to come back again, and I can safely say that 50 per cent. of the men would rather stop at home on Saturday afternoon. We had no trouble with the first shift, from 6 to 2. If you made it a half-shift on the first shift you would have just the same trouble. They would say it was not worth the trouble to go into the mine for a half-shift.

4. *Mr J Duncan.*] Did I understand you to say that 30 per cent. of your men would rather stay at home on Saturday afternoon?—No; 50 per cent.

5. Then you are favourable to the half-holiday?—No. I say we should either have to work the full shift or not at all.

6. But 50 per cent. of the men themselves would be favourable to the half-holiday?—No. They are paid so-much per ton: the men want to work the full Saturday

7 If the half-holiday were brought into force, would they agree to go to work on the Saturday?—No. I say 50 per cent. of them would not go to work. That is our experience.

8. *Mr Seddon.*] Have your men expressed any wish for the half-holiday?—No. The only thing they have asked for is the pay Saturday

9 *Mr Colvin.*] Your men get paid at so-much per ton?—Yes.

10. How many per cent. of them are paid by day-wages?—I suppose nearly half

11. I suppose those men who are paid so-much per day would be anxious to get the Saturday half-holiday if they got paid for it?—Certainly, if paid a full shift for four hours' work. They would jump at it.

12. Men working in a quartz-mine and getting so-much per day would be glad to get the half-holiday if paid for the full day?—Yes, but that would materially increase the cost of mining. In our case it would mean a very large increase in the wages. We average five days a week all told, and it would mean a shilling a day rise for them.

13. I take it that that is what is intended by the Bill?—I did not take it in that way

14. *Hon. Mr R McKenzie*] You pay so-much per hour?—So-much per shift.

15. *The Chairman.*] And a short shift is as good as a long one?—Yes. If taken in the way suggested it would mean giving the men a shilling a day more. It would work out very badly, in this way: the miners working on tonnage rates would get nothing by the holiday, but the truckers and day-wages men generally would gain. The result would be that the miners would turn round and ask for an increase proportionately, which if granted would mean a large increase in the cost of mining.

16. *Hon. Mr R McKenzie.*] Do you do your trucking on day-wages?—Yes.

17 If this Bill became law would you work that shift at all?—Not if I had to pay a full shift for it.

18. You would keep your mine idle?—Yes.

19. Consequently the truckers and others would get no wages at all for that day?—That is so.

20. If the miners did not work they would keep all the other men idle?—Just so. The men would not go to work. We have proof of it by experience now

21 With regard to your reference to the interference of the shipping I suppose that would have a very serious effect sometimes?—Yes. I will just tell you what happened last week. We were 200 tons short for the "Ngahere," and she had to wait a tide in order to get that 200 tons. The consequence was that she could not get away on the Wednesday, and did not sail until the following Monday, whereas if that 200 tons had been loaded she would have got away on the first tide.

22. Have you any arrangement with the Union Steamship Company as to demurrage or delays?—All that sort of thing is arranged with the head office of our company.

23. *Hon. Mr Guinness*] What is the proportion of men employed in coal-cutting in relation to the rest of the men, including truckers?—I think they are about half-and-half, as near as I can remember

24. You have had experience in New South Wales?—Yes.

25. What is the practice there?—They have the full pay Saturday off.

26. No half-holiday?—No; not in my time.

27 *The Chairman.*] How long is that ago?—About fifteen years. I was over there about four years ago, and they had no half-holiday then.

GEORGE GEITH TOWNSEND examined. (No. 4.)

1 *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—Manager of the Paparoa Coal-mining Company

2. You desire to make a statement with regard to the Half-holiday for Miners Bill?—Yes. I have not much to add to what has been said by the other witnesses, and I think they have covered the ground very fully. As far as my knowledge goes in regard to the agreements made with the miners, I know of no case where they have asked for the alteration proposed by the Bill. We have, unfortunately, had experience of troubles at our mine, but this particular matter has not been in dispute at any time. The men not having asked for the present system to be changed, it shows, I take it, that they are quite satisfied with the present arrangement. The wages are usually paid on the Friday, and the following day is an idle day. It would result in much inconvenience if it were decided to work only a few hours every Saturday, and in loss to the men themselves. It is also recognized that pay Saturday affords an excellent opportunity for the carrying-out of necessary repair-work which cannot be done when the mine is in full operation. If this work were not done on the Saturday it would have to be done on the Monday, but until the mine was ready the men would be idle, so that their earning-power would be decreased.

3. *Hon. Mr R McKenzie.*] I suppose the full holiday on pay Saturday suits the management as well as the men?—Yes, it suits all of us.

4. *Mr E H Taylor*] Do you think the rearrangement of the hours in order to provide for the half-day would materially affect the men?—I think it would decrease their earning-power. As pointed out by previous witnesses, I think the miners would not agree to work for a half-shift.

5. *Hon. Mr. Guinness*] You are simply the legal manager of the company?—Manager of the head office here.

6 You know nothing about the practical working of the mine?—No, I am not a practical man.

7 What hours do the miners work on Saturday?—They start during the week at 8 o'clock and work till 4, and the other shift from 4 to midnight.

8. What proportion of men have you at work as coal-cutters as compared with those who are not?—I should say about 40 to 45 per cent. are coal-cutters.

9. And from 50 to 55 per cent. are on day-wages?—Yes.

10. Do you work two shifts in your mine?—We are at present working two shifts.

THOMAS SHAILER WESTON examined. (No. 5.)

1 *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Weston?—A solicitor practising in Wellington, and I am local director of the Talisman Gold-mining Company. I am not acquainted with the practical working of the mine, and do not pretend to offer any opinion on the matter, but I have a letter here written by Mr. Charles Rhodes to Mr. William Pryor on behalf of the Waihi, Grand Junction, Talisman, New Zealand Crown Mines, Waihi Reefs Consolidated, and Komata Reefs Companies, and they are practically all the big mines in the Ohinemuri district. The letter sets out at length the reasons why they think this Half-holiday Bill would be prejudicial not only to the companies, but to the men employed in those mines. This was forwarded to Mr. Stansfield, our manager, and he in a letter to myself strongly supported the reasons given in this letter, and stated that the Saturday Half-holiday Bill would seriously affect the working of many mines where more than one shift was employed. With the permission of the Committee I would like to read the letter: "Auckland New Zealand, 2nd August, 1910.—William Pryor, Esq., Secretary, New Zealand Employers' Federation, Wellington.—DEAR SIR,—(Half-holiday for Miners Bill.)—The principal mining companies of Ohinemuri, comprising Waihi Company, Grand Junction, Talisman, New Zealand Crown Mines, Waihi Reefs Consolidated, and Komata Reefs Companies, wish to make a strong protest against the proposed Bill providing for a half-holiday becoming law. Their grounds of objection are: 1. That not one word of demand by the miners has been heard in Ohinemuri for any such holiday 2. That to all intents and purposes there is already freedom on Saturday afternoons for two-thirds of the miners and all the labourers after 1 p.m. 3. That under the system of shifts it is easy for any man wishing to be off on a special Saturday afternoon to arrange it with his mates by merely exchanging shifts. 4. That compliance with the proposed Act would mean that no work at all would be done from noon on Saturday till 1 a.m. on Monday morning, men thereby losing half a day shift and all an afternoon shift once a week. The reason for this is that, though in the Waihi mines there are few wages-men underground, the men on the surface both at Waihi and elsewhere are all on wages, being engaged as winding engineers, stokers, bracedmen, filling-in men, tallymen, smiths, pumpmen, and are absolutely necessary to enable the miners to even go underground, and still more so to work there. It would not pay to give these men overtime, so that all work would have to stop. This would involve a serious loss both to men and their employers. At the Waihi Company's mine alone it would mean the crushing of 3,500 tons less per month, which would mean the discharge of 10 per cent. of the company's miners owing to less quantity of ore required. Ten per cent. of the Waihi Company's miners represents at least fifty men from underground, and it would affect probably about twenty-five more on the surface, a pretty serious reduction of seventy-five men from one mine alone, and proportionately the same from all the others. 5. That the batteries cannot stop and start at a moment's notice. To cease at 12 noon means that stamps must stop at 10 a.m., so that the ore-pulp and solutions in circulation in the plants can be got rid of. Similarly, before restarting the stamps the machinery and pumps have to be again got into running-order to receive the pulp from the stamps. It would certainly be senseless, after having stopped the mills for Saturday afternoons, to start them again, say, by 6 or 6.30 p.m., only again to stop them three hours and a half later preparatory to shutting down for Sunday. It is certain that any such proposal would result in serious loss, and, as employees are already prone to complain about their small incomes, it would mean that their earning-hours would be still further reduced and their wages correspondingly curtailed. 6. If in a mine troubled with water the half-holiday had to be observed, it would mean, particularly during periods of drainage of a new level, that water would rise so much that men would lose about two days per week in order to gain a half-holiday they have not asked for; and it is certain that it is the exception that any mine can pay increased expenses on to-day's rates and long continue to exist. The representatives of the above-named companies are unanimous in their opinion that the Bill is against the best interests of the whole community, and hope that members will resist it to the utmost.—Yours faithfully, CHAS. RHODES." I need scarcely point out that, taking the Ohinemuri field, with the exception of the Waihi and the Talisman, there is not a single company which has paid any dividends outside a few pence. Take the Crown Mine: It only paid 3d., and has not paid a cent for twenty years, and other mines have not paid a dividend for years. The Waihi Grand Junction has been at work nearly ten years and has not paid a dividend. These are the indorsements of practical men. With regard to Mr. Stansfield, manager of the Talisman Mine, I have visited the mine and spoken to the men, and they say he is a most considerate man, and his opinion is that, seeing that the Talisman Mine works three shifts, this Half-holiday Bill is not desired by the miners.

2 *Mr E H Taylor*] *Re* the arrangement of the hours, would that make any difference, because the unions have been discussing this Bill? As to the shifts, it might possibly be just as agreeable to the men if the midnight shift could go on on Friday night to 4 o'clock on Saturday morning, the day shift at 4 till 8, and the afternoon shift from 8 to noon. That would mean that all the shifts would knock off at noon on Saturday?—It would mean that the mine would stop at noon. The stamps would stop at 10 o'clock.

3. That implies that all the men would enjoy the Saturday afternoon off?—Yes.

4. Now there is always a shift on?—Yes; but the men on that shift, if they wanted to, could exchange their work with other men.

5. That would imply that there would still be a shift at work?—Yes. The strong point is this: The miners do not want it themselves. I am speaking for the Ohinemuri district. I have not heard a word of complaint against the present system.

6. In speaking of the unions, I have an expression here from one of the most important unions in the Karangahake district—the Thames Miners' Union. They consider it favourably so far as it goes, and I am instructed to support this Bill if it meets with my approval. So you see, taking the large unions, which include the Karangahake mines, they do not see the objections that you see?—I think most of the Thames miners only work one shift, and none are in a dividend-paying stage. The difficulty is with the stamps and batteries.

7 I simply wish to state that the union has considered the Bill, and the expression is that, after consideration, it was approved of?—Do they understand that of course they would not be paid for the time given to them?

8. It would simply mean a readjustment of hours—they would work the same number of hours?—I do not see how they could do it. Nearly all the Thames mines are one-shift mines. The Karangahake Union at present is in a chaotic state. I know, because I endeavoured to get an expression of opinion from the officers.

9. *Mr Anderson.*] Would this half-holiday mean the closing-down of your mine?—Mr Rhodes mentions the closing-down of the mine.

10. That would mean that the men would lose twelve hours' work?—Yes. We should not be able to start again at 6 o'clock. It would not pay the batteries to work for three hours and a half.

11 It would mean that all mines which run three shifts would lose three hours' work a week if this Bill were passed?—Yes. At all events, it would certainly mean the closing-down of the batteries from 10 o'clock.

12. You cannot speak for the miners?—No.

13. *Mr Seddon.*] You spoke about a mine troubled with water flowing into it?—Yes.

14. You know something about the Ross Flat would that be affected?—Yes, certainly.

15. Could not men be kept on under the Bill?—Yes, there is provision made for urgent work. But take the sinking of the shaft at the Waihi Grand Junction Mine: They were crushing ore there that did not pay. This year there is a small margin over cost, but if you increase the cost of pumping by compelling them to pay extra wages the mine will be hard-hit. There are three factors that are causing anxiety at present—the Silting Commission's report, the provision in the Mining Act for an extra 3d. in the ounce of gold, and there is this Half-holiday Bill. These proposals are hitting mining all the time.

16. The engines in the Ross Flat Mine would have to be kept going, and the men kept on would have to be paid for extra time?—Yes.

17 Have you any idea of how many men would have to be kept on to keep the water down?—There would have to be four or five at the Ross.

18. And how many at the generating-station?—Two at the generating-station.

19. *Hon. Mr Guinness*] Could you not so arrange your shifts that the men could knock off work at 12 o'clock?—We could only work to 10 o'clock in the batteries.

20. What are the hours your three shifts work?—From 12 to 8, 8 to 4, and 4 to 12 at midnight.

21 Could that arrangement not be altered so that they could start at 4 a.m. and knock off at noon?—That would not effect it. We have the midnight on Saturday and 12 o'clock on Sunday to consider. Some one has to lose twelve hours. Where it will hit most is that if you have to stop your batteries the underground men will have to suffer.

22. Is that so? Could not the extra men you put on keep the batteries going?—Yes, but if the batteries stop it reduces the output. There is the duty on the stamps to consider, and you have to keep your stamps going to their utmost capacity. If you knock off work for twelve hours during a week there is serious loss.

23 My Bill provides that you start at 5 o'clock instead of 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and you only lose an hour in the last shift?—Your Bill is a splendid Bill for a single-shift mine. It is equivalent to the Daylight-saving Bill, because in the mine on Saturday, instead of starting at 8 o'clock, they would start at 4 o'clock, and stop at 12; but in all big mines, as Mr Stansfield says, it would mean a serious loss.

(No. 6.)

Hon. Mr Guinness I desire to put in the following letter I have received from the general secretary of the Thames Miners' Union, dated 11th August, 1910. "SIR,—I am instructed by the Committee of Management to convey to you their appreciation of your efforts for the improvement of the conditions of the workers of the Dominion. Your National Sick and Accident Bill met with the fullest approval of all, and will be of great benefit to all workers. *Re* the Half-holiday in Mines Bill, however, we would beg to point out that the benefit would work out unequally in mines working three shifts, and the night shift would work the full six days, the day shift not at all, and the afternoon shift would not be able to participate in any Saturday afternoon sports, as they would have to be at the mine by 4.30 to get ready for commencing work at 5 o'clock. We would respectfully suggest that the Bill should provide for each shift working only four hours on Saturday, so that the night shift would work from midnight to 4 a.m. Saturday morning, day shift from 4 a.m. to 8, and the third shift from 8 to noon, which would enable all to fully enjoy the benefit of Saturday afternoon off equally.—I have the honour to be, sir, yours obediently, W. H. LUCAS, General Secretary." I am prepared to suggest certain amendments to meet the wishes of the miners.

The Chairman. Is that all you wish to put in?—Yes. I think we had better take the objections that may be made against the Bill.

THURSDAY, 25TH AUGUST, 1910.

MARK FAGAN examined. (No. 7)

1 *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Fagan?—My occupation is that of secretary of the miners' union at Reefton, but I have been gold-mining all my life.

2. With reference to the Half-holiday for Miners Bill, would you make a general statement, and we could ask questions afterwards?—Yes, I will. I might point out that as the Bill reads now it says between the hours of 12 o'clock and 5 in the afternoon for all miners. As far as the gold-miners are concerned, this is absolutely impossible. We have been attempting to get this half-holiday for miners for a number of years, and under our last award we were to work forty-five hours per week, but this has been taken from us and we now work forty-seven hours. Miners' complaint is very prevalent in the Reefton district—in fact, I claim it is more prevalent there than in any other part of New Zealand, this being because the mines there are very deep and dry. Personally speaking, I would rather see the hours of work decreased than the wages increased, because a decrease in the number of working-hours means the prolongation of life. In the Reefton Cemetery I could take you and point out to you numbers of graves of miners who have followed their occupation, and none of these men were over forty-four or forty-five years of age. Miners' complaint is very prevalent, and if the Government of this country could see fit to decrease the number of hours of labour they would be conferring a boon on the men who follow the industry in my district.

3. *Hon. Mr. Guinness.*] What alteration to the clause would you suggest with regard to the Saturday half-holiday?—I would advocate the abolition of the night shift altogether, and let the men work their eight hours a day up to Saturday. I am speaking now of quartz-mines. I would suggest that the day shift go on at 8 o'clock and knock off at midday; that the afternoon shift go on at midday and cease work at 4—that is, if the forty-four-hour-week Bill is carried.

4. *The Chairman.*] Have you anything to say about the proviso with regard to where wages-men are employed?—Yes. That is the exception I take to the Bill. I hold that if the Bill is carried in its entirety it will be no good to us. We have been attempting, and with some success, all along to do away with the contract system, and if this Bill is carried in its entirety it will have the effect of encouraging the contract system. If it were put on the statute-book as it reads now, all the employers in our district would turn round and substitute the present wages-day system for the contract system, and so side-step the Bill. I take it this Bill means "in or about a mine," because that is a very important point.

5. *Hon. Mr. Guinness.*] It says so distinctly?—It would mean also battery-men, I presume.

6. *Mr. Anderson.*] How do you apply your theory of three shifts, Mr. Fagan?—I said two shifts.

7. You are not in favour of one shift?—Two shifts is what I want.

8. Are there no mines working with three shifts in your district now?—One mine only.

9. How would you apply the half-holiday to such a mine as that?—I would abolish the night shift altogether, because it is an ungodly shift to work on. If it were not possible to abolish that night shift, then I would apply the same system as that in vogue in northern Queensland, where the forty-four-hours week is in operation. There the night shift does not go on on Sunday at all, but the miner's shift commences on the Monday night at midnight. By the time the Saturday morning arrives the men find they have worked only five shifts instead of six, as in this country. The only way to work a forty-four-hours week is to have a morning shift from 8 to 12, another from 12 to 4, and a night shift from 4 to 8.

10. Then you have no half-holiday on Saturday for these men?—But the men would have a forty-four-hours week. We want a shortening of hours.

11. That is a different matter to this Bill?—I understand it was the intention of the House to reduce the hours from forty-eight to forty-four.

12. You understand that it is not provided for in this Bill?—I do not grasp that.

13. My object in asking you the question is to find out how it would affect the dredges. Three shifts are worked in connection with dredges, and I should like to know how you think it would affect mines and dredges working three shifts, because the matter applies not only to Reefton but to the whole Dominion. There are many mines and dredges that work three shifts, and it would obviously create a loss and inconvenience if the mines were shut down at 12 and started again at 5?—It would be impossible. It would only benefit the afternoon-shift men to the extent of one hour.

14. On every Saturday there would be a half-holiday between 12 and 5?—The half-holiday would be unworkable so far as the afternoon shift is concerned on Saturday.

My question was not a hostile one. I simply wanted to get your opinion on the matter.

15. *Mr. E. H. Taylor.*] With reference to the proviso, "Provided that this section shall not apply to any gold-mine or coal-mine where no wages-men are employed," do you mean to say that if this was brought into operation it would entirely remove wages-men, and bring in the contract system?—Undoubtedly. It is obvious that if this were carried the employers would turn round and put the men on contract, and they would therefore not come under the Act at all.

16. *Mr. Seddon.*] How many would this benefit in Reefton? How many would benefit in Reefton from the 12-to-5 holiday?—To answer that question would mean finding out the number of men working on day shifts. It would benefit about one-third, I suppose.

17. Would the same men get the same benefit the next Saturday, or would a different lot of men benefit?—The shifts are changed repeatedly. Men would benefit about once in three weeks.

18. *Mr. Scott.*] Did I understand you to say, Mr. Fagan, that the hours had been increased from forty-five to forty-seven? When did that take place?—Three years ago, on the 31st May, through the Arbitration Court,

19 *Hon. Mr Guinness.*] If the clause in the Bill provided, Mr Fagan, that a shift should on Saturday work only four hours, would that carry out your suggestion of a forty-four-hours week?—That is so.

20. I understand your evidence to be in that direction: the first shift, at 8, would only work till 12 midday, the second from 12 to 4, and the night shift would go on at 4 and come off at 8. The effect of the Bill is to make the week a forty-four-hours one. Striking out the words "twelve o'clock noon and five o'clock in the afternoon" and saying in their place that shifts shall on Saturday work only four hours will meet the case, will it not?—Undoubtedly I have seen it worked in New South Wales, and it is in operation at Charters Towers, Queensland, and other places, and has been for the last thirty years. Charters Towers is a very big place.

21. The proviso was inserted so as not to interfere with the hours of labour in privately owned mines—that is to say, where all the miners themselves work without wages-men. It was put in so as not to affect these miners; but it could be altered, because I understand from the miners' delegates that they are quite willing to have it binding on mines owned by companies, large mine-owners, or by private miners.

22. *Mr E H Taylor*] May I ask, Mr Fagan, how this affects tributers. On the Thames Goldfield, for instance, there are a number of tributers. Do you think it would liberate tributers, or restrict them from working from 12 noon to 5?—In answer to that question I may say that, so far as my experience goes, tributers are the first to take advantage of their freedom. Tributers are men who work mostly for themselves, and in my district one of the mines is worked solely by tributers, and they knock off at midday. In my opinion it should apply to tributers as well as to miners working on wages, because a tributer would have sense enough to know that the holiday would benefit his health.

23. Supposing he has reached gold, and wants to get it out?—I think it should be made to apply to tributers.

24. *Mr. Anderson.*] If the suggestion made by Mr Guinness in his question were given effect to, it would do away, of course, with the half-holiday—that is to say, the miners would not cease work on the Saturday afternoon as provided for in this Bill?—It is unworkable.

25. A portion of the miners then would not have the half-holiday. They would simply have a half-day's work. They would not be able to take part in any sports on Saturday afternoon?—Two-thirds would not. It is not sports we are after; it is fresh air.

26 *Mr Colvin.*] I understand that the men want a forty-four-hours Bill—that all men be compelled to knock off after a forty-four-hours week?—That is my meaning.

27 *Mr Anderson.*] Your experience applies solely to gold-mining: you do not know how it would affect coal-miners?—There are two coal-miners' representatives here to give evidence.

WILLIAM EDWARD PARRY examined. (No. 8.)

1 *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—William Edward Parry. I am president of the Waihi Miners' Union, and workers' inspector.

2 Let us hear your views, Mr Parry?—I will give my views briefly in regard to this Bill. It seems to me that there is a slight misunderstanding, and that we are trying to split straws in connection with the Bill, and I think that at this juncture I may say that as this Bill now reads it is impossible to give a half-holiday to each man on each shift. If the Bill is to have any great effect at all it will be better to make it so that the hours of work will be reduced a certain amount. I think if the Government makes provision to decrease the workers' hours of work per week, and the companies can be left to fix the starting-times of shifts, it would be a great advantage to the workers. I do not see, myself, how we are going to get over the difficulty of this half-holiday question unless it is distinctly stipulated in this Bill that the hours of work are going to be so-many per week. Under this Bill the companies, I understand, if they so desire, can open the mine again at 5 o'clock and work on until 12. That is what the miners are very much against, and it should be made to apply to any gold or coal mine where men are employed. The workers of the Dominion are very much against the contract system. It would not apply to a great extent to Waihi, where nearly all the work is carried on on the contract system, and that system there is proving very detrimental to the workers, not only at the Waihi Mine, but it will prove detrimental to the rising generation. During the past twelve months £200 has been paid out on account of blood-poisoning. The doctors that I have had conversation with say that the poisoning is caused through the men becoming run down in health, the blood becoming impoverished, and there is a consequent inability on the part of the men to resist the effects of any poisonous matter. That being so, it would be for the benefit of the miners if the hours of work could be reduced, because lives would be prolonged. Another thing in connection with the contract system is that the whole of the responsibility is placed on the workers. I may say that the workers are working the Waihi Mine, the responsibility being taken from the company, and the system at the Waihi Mine at the present time they did not want to encourage. The Bill, if passed into law, would encourage that system. I am strongly in favour of the reduction in the number of hours worked per week, and that is, in my opinion, the only way in which we can come to any satisfactory conclusion. There is no doubt that if this Bill came into force there would be a great deal of wrangling in regard to the fixing-up of the hours of labour. At Waihi the men start on Monday morning at 1 o'clock, and that is an unearthly hour for any man to begin at in order that he may earn his livelihood. He works forty-seven hours a week on the 12-o'clock shift, and on the day shift and afternoon shift he works forty-six, so that the night shift would have to be changed considerably. I may say this: that the miners of this country are going to fight for the abolition of the night shift, and I think, myself, they are entitled to the abolition, simply because the men working on night shift cannot obtain the same rest as the men on day shift, and their home affairs are not the same. Through trying to sleep in the daytime,

and working at night, the men's nerves become unstrung, their constitution suffers, and they become run down, so that at last when they go to work at night they are more likely to meet with accidents than they would be under other conditions. We can prove beyond doubt that that is so. I do not think there is anything further I can say, but we do want a reduction in working-hours per week, and I do not think, myself, we can come to any satisfactory conclusion until the Bill says how many hours per week we shall work. My colleague from Waikino is in touch with the conditions at his place, and he can give you an outline in connection with battery-work. My union have no objection to a reduction in the hours of work, but at the same time they think that this Bill is unworkable.

3 *Mr Scott.*] If the night shift were done away with fewer men would be employed, would there not?—Not necessarily

4. Supposing two shifts are worked, will two shifts still employ the same number of men?—They could make provision whereby the men could work on either of the two shifts. They only work two shifts now in some places. If they wanted to have the same output they would find more places.

5. *Mr Seddon.*] What is your scheme for reducing the hours of work besides the taking-away of the night shift? Could you increase the hours of labour on day shift to do away with the night shift?—No.

6. You spoke about a reduction in the hours per week?—We will say you reduce the hours to forty, and the company and the workers would then fix the hours of work and the time to start. There is nothing to be frightened of in connection with that.

7 *Mr E H Taylor*] I should like to ask Mr Parry for a plain answer as to what effect the contract system has on competition between the men?—It has a great effect, simply because we notice it at different times at Waihi. For instance, if there is no available man about, there are no jobs put on the board, but as soon as it is found a few men are out of employment the jobs go on the board, because it is then the company knows there will be a great deal of competition. In connection with the Waihi working I may tell you we have very nearly half the men working on wages for contractors. The men that work on wages for these contractors run exactly the same risk as the contractors in the matter of responsibility, the contractors paying their men so-much per day, and reaping the benefit. And some of those men—the contractors—are always in favour of the contract system, and that is the system at the Waihi Mine. The company has no need to fight the workers, because they have established a system which compels the workers to fight amongst themselves.

8. Do you find that the contractors pay the average wage earned by the men on day-work, or more?—More than the award wages? Well, I should say so, 8s. 6d. being the award rate.

9. I heard a rumour that some of the contractors were endeavouring to keep the wages down to the award standard?—They pay from 10s. or 11s. to 12s. per day. With the permission of the Chairman, I should like to point out that at the last Arbitration Court sitting Mr Rhodes, when giving evidence as to whether he preferred the contract to the day-wages system, said he had worked it out from a unit point of view, and that more work could be got from two men under the contract system than from three men under wages. He said that the average wage of the workers in the mines was 12s. Now, under his unit system two men would earn £1 4s., but if he had to employ three men it would work out at £1 5s. 6d., so that he reaped the benefit. A man's wages are not based on his earning-power. But the Judge does not say how much power he shall sell. When the award is fixed it is not done on the basis of the amount of power we expend.

10. Then, the men are actually losing 1s. 6d. per day?—Yes.

11 What effect would the abolition of the night shift have on the companies generally: would the output be decreased?—There would be no decrease in output. We have coal-miners, and they do not work on the 12-o'clock shift, although some years ago they worked night shift, and if the abolition of the night shift were brought about it would find its own level. The mines would be opened up to a larger extent, and they would make provision to put out the output they required.

12. Then the abolition of the night shift would cause more men to be employed during the day shifts?—Yes.

13. I want to see more men employed, and if the abolition of the night shift would be the means of employing more men it would be a good thing for the workers. What effect would the forty-four-hours week have upon employment? Do you think that a forty-four-hours week would increase the number of men?—If you decrease the number of hours of labour, I think every man understands that you must increase the number of men.

14. You think that miners would earn a living-wage in the forty-four hours?—Yes. I should like to point out what we earn in my part of the country. Take June for the Martha Mine, 510 men employed: on Mr. Rhodes's own figures, at 12s. per day they earned £7,344 per month. Twenty-five per cent. of that money is kept back on an average six months in the twelve. Those men who are employed by the contractors are paid their full wages to that point, but the contractors' 25 per cent. is kept back, so that they have to pay wages-men and their own wages out of the 75 per cent. Twenty-five per cent. out of £7,344 is £1,836. That is kept back six months in the year. Then we have a scheme up there of keeping nine days in hand. Nine days in hand would amount to £2,754. They never received that for twelve months. Deposits on contracts (fifty contracts) averaged £5, amounting to £250. The money that is actually in hand every month, with the nine days in hand, amounts to £3,654. The men have to pay that before they have the right to work. The argument in the Arbitration Court was that it was impossible to get round and measure the contracts, so that they were compelled to keep the money or else increase the number of the staff, the effect of the argument of the attorney of the Waihi

Company being that in order to fulfil this engagement the men had to lose this amount of money. The figures are approximate, but are very nearly correct.

15. Then, during the whole year there was about £3,000 in wages actually held by the company?—That is so. That is only men working underground.

16. Those companies grant no interest on that deposit?—No.

17. Do you think they ought to do so?—Most decidedly. For all men employed (150 artisans excepted) the amount kept back by the company is £7,024.

18. Do you think it would be wise to insert a clause in the Mining Amendment Act to the effect that all such moneys held are to bear interest?—Yes. I think there should be some clause inserted in the Mining Amendment Act whereby no man should be allowed to keep nine days' wages, and also 25 per cent. on a contract is absolutely ridiculous in the extreme.

19. *Mr. Anderson.*] What do they keep it for?—A man works nine days in hand and 25 per cent., but really only receives 75 per cent. of his earnings until the contract is finished; so if they paid the men in full on pay-day for the work done they would still hold nine days in hand.

20. *Mr. Taylor.*] Would the men be better satisfied if that 75 per cent. was raised to 90 per cent.?—I cannot see that they should keep one iota.

21. *Mr. J. Duncan.*] I cannot understand why money is kept back at all. What is the reason for making deductions for the nine days?—Mr. Rhodes lives at Auckland, and he says that the cheques have to be forwarded to him. If he lived in Italy it would be all the same.

The Chairman. The arbitration award allows this to be done. That is the trouble.

22. *Mr. J. Duncan.*] Do the day-men suffer by this too, and have they to work until the end of the work before this is done?—No, you get nine days in hand; but if a man works continuously for twelve months this is lying in the office until the twelve months is over.

23. Is there any other employment in New Zealand where there is a similar deduction? In the sawmilling business I am not aware that the nine days is kept back?—It is a fact that the money is kept back.

24. I sympathize with any man who has his wages kept back?—We have a system there at the present time, the shrinkage system, and I say this that it is robbery.

25. Explain the shrinkage system?—Instead of filling in as you cut your stope out, you just run sufficient out from underneath to allow you to keep breaking on, and this dirt is all run out when the stope is filled in. This is to do away with extra timbering, and that kind of thing, and means a great reduction in expenses, but we have never received anything for it. Under this shrinkage system a man gets paid for so-much dirt that he runs through the stope; but, as a matter of fact, you cannot run more out than you are able to work with, and you are paid on what you run out. Say, for instance, you get 4s. per ton for dirt you truck out, you only get 3s. 6d. for the dirt that remains in the stope, because you get this for trucking it out.

The Chairman. I think we are now getting into a discussion on the Mining Bill, and we are only dealing with the Half-holiday Bill now.

26. *Mr. J. Duncan.*] I understood the former witness to say the last award was forty-four hours, and that there had been an increase to forty-seven hours. Has the Court power to alter the hours for you?—That may be in the district where Mr. Fagan comes from, but it does not obtain at Waihi. We work forty-six hours day and afternoon. The night shift works forty-seven.

27. *Mr. Colvin.*] Does this Bill give the relief the miners are actually looking for?—No.

28. I understand the miners want a forty-four-hours-week Bill passed through Parliament? Yes.

29. And if the night shift were done away with, with very little expense to the company equally as many men could get out the same quantity of quartz?—Yes.

30. You want another three hours off?—Yes.

31. And this Bill before the Committee does not give them?—No.

32. *Hon. Mr. Guinness.*] You will see the Bill proposes to give five hours more, Mr. Parry?—I do not think it gives anything at all, because if the Bill goes through at it stands the company could open their mine and work from 5 to 12. That would mean seven hours' work. It would give just a little benefit.

33. If there are three shifts in the mine, that is twenty-four hours' work, and the Bill says five hours shall not be worked on holidays: that reduces the hours of labour by five. Would you agree to an alteration of the Bill by striking out "twelve to five" and saying that each shift shall only work four hours? Would that be practicable?—That would give forty-four hours a week. Of course, it would develop into the same thing almost, because employers and workers would make arrangements between themselves.

34. They would have a declaration of the Legislature that no man shall work more than forty-four hours?—If forty-four hours were put in, they would have the agreement worked so that they would have the advantage on the Saturday.

35. Would not the alteration be effective if it were stated that half-shifts only shall be worked on Saturdays?—If it was made law that each man work only four hours on Saturdays, that would have the desired effect.

36. How would they benefit by the forty-four hours? What is the difference between forty-four hours' work and saying men shall on Saturdays work half-shifts?—There is no difference.

37. If the Bill were altered in that direction, would it, in your opinion, be then effective?—Yes, because people would have to make an arrangement as to what time to start work. If the Bill says that no more than four hours shall be worked on Saturday, that means forty-four hours.

38. It could be put in both ways?—I think "no man to work more than four hours on Saturday" would fix up the difficulty, because that would mean forty-four hours' work.

39. Have you had any experience of working a forty-four-hours week in any of the States?—No.

CLAUDE POWELL examined. (No. 9.)

1 *The Chairman.*] What is your full name?—Claude Powell. I am a battery hand employed at Waikino.

2 You have heard the evidence of Mr Fagan and Mr Parry in connection with the matter We should like to get evidence from you with reference to battery hands?—So far as batteries are concerned, this Bill is of no use. A forty-four-hours week would benefit us at Waikino. We are at present working forty-eight.

3. Where does this Bill fail?—In the part “from twelve to five.” The men could be worked after 5 o'clock.

JOHN DOWGRAY examined. (No. 10.)

1 *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—John Dowgray

2 Where do you reside?—At Granity I am a coal-miner working at the Millerton Mine.

3. You hold some official position in connection with the Federation of Labour?—Yes, I am treasurer of the Federation of Labour. So far as the coal-miners are concerned, they are strongly opposed to the Bill in its present form. We do not wish to stand in the way of the gold-miners in their endeavour to obtain a reduction in working-hours to forty-four, provided they get paid for it. We have already had provisions made on the subject under our award. Coal-miners, generally speaking, work forty-eight hours one week and forty the next. Any alteration in that system would, I am afraid, meet with strong opposition from the coal-miners all over the Dominion. We are in favour of a forty-hours week. A forty-four-hours week is no good to the coal-miners. The Bill, so far as I am concerned, is a farce. I cannot see any good in the Bill at all. The name of the Bill is wrong to begin with, because it is not a “half weekly holiday.” The only thing I see in the Bill relating to holidays is that you shall shut down the mine for a given period. It does not say mining shall not engage a man's full time—viz., forty-eight hours per week. The only feasible reason for shutting down from 12 to 5 is to get the mine clear of bad air. A man who is going to work at 5 o'clock at night is not going to attend any sports. The man that comes off the previous shift may go to sports. The Bill would only benefit the day-shift men in that respect. Of course Mr Guinness has withdrawn the proviso relating to where no wages-men are employed. I am strongly opposed to this part of the Bill. The only feasible reason for a reduction in the hours is for the sake of health. If the provision for coal-miners is struck out, and the provision for gold-miners is left, we do not mind in any way.

4. *Mr J C Thomson.*] Forty-eight hours one week and forty the next—that is a day for every two weeks. Are you satisfied with that?—We should like a forty-hour week if we could get it.

5. *Mr E H Taylor*] You prefer a full day on Saturday?—Yes.

6. *Hon. Mr Guinness*] You have taken the opinion of the miners that they do not want any alteration?—Yes, all the coal-miners.

7 We can withdraw any reference in the Bill to coal-miners, then. You say you now get this holiday every alternate Saturday. Do you get paid for the Saturdays you do not work?—Certainly not.

8. That part of the benefit of the Bill you do not want?—Your Bill does not say a man shall be paid. Reduce the hours, and the wages will regulate themselves by-and-by. That has been the effect in the west of Scotland, where I come from. They work five days a week and eight hours a day.

9. *Mr Colvin.*] It was said that when the bank-to-bank clause came into force it would reduce the output?—Certainly not. In some places it may have the effect of forcing the companies to put larger machinery in to increase the output.

10. *The Chairman*] It does not reduce the output per man employed. Your experience in Scotland, where they work short hours, bears this out?—Yes.

JAMES FISHER examined. (No. 11.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Do you wish to simply corroborate what Mr Dowgray has said?—Yes.

2. *Mr Scott.*] Do I understand you to say, Mr Fisher, that you prefer a Bill reducing the number of hours of work, rather than one providing for a half-holiday, as this Bill does?—We get the full holiday every fortnight. The men would not go to work for half a day. Some of the miners in my district have to walk four miles to work and four miles back. I should like the working to be five days a week.

Mr Fagan asked if they could take it that the Hon. Mr Guinness would withdraw from the Bill all mention of coal-miners.

The Chairman: Yes, that is so.

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