

10. While you were connected with them did the men at Otira complain about any of the conditions?—Yes. All the time I was connected with the Otira branch there were complaints—chiefly through men working more than six hours in wet places. That seemed to be the chief point in dispute. And the sanitary arrangements in the tunnel did not seem to suit the men; they were continually complaining about them.

11. When you brought these matters under the notice of Mr. McLean he immediately gave them attention?—I never brought them under his notice.

12. What were you speaking from, then?—Just what took place at the meetings. This strike took place two days after I was elected secretary of the union, and I attended a couple of meetings at Otira afterwards, and we decided to disband our branch there; so I only met Mr. McLean once. I heard many complaints at the union meetings while I was going to Otira. I was there three times altogether, and the chief causes of complaint seemed to be the sanitary arrangements in the tunnel, the fact that men were working too long in wet places, and the ventilation—the dynamite-smoke hanging too long.

13. Have these things been rectified since you brought them under the notice of Mr. McLean?—I never brought them under his notice.

14. But when they were brought under his notice?—I cannot speak with any knowledge of that, because I never brought them under Mr. McLean's notice. The trouble was that this work was under the Public Contracts Act and not under the Mining Act, and we realized that we could not get any redress.

15. You have asked to have this work brought under the Mining Act?—Yes.

16. How did you endeavour to get it brought under the Mining Act?—By deputations to Parliament. We have mentioned it several times in deputations.

17. What representations were made? Were they deputations to Ministers?—Yes. I believe we went to Mr. McKenzie on one occasion when he was Minister of Mines.

18. The object you had would be to get the bank-to-bank privilege, would it not?—That was one reason why. Another was in connection with the sanitary arrangements and the ventilation of the tunnel. If an Inspector of Mines were going there and inspecting, we should be able to have the same conditions there as at mines.

19. What was the complaint about the ventilation—that there was not sufficient ventilation?—About the dynamite-smoke hanging.

20. How could that be avoided?—We suggested a suction fan. In justice to Mr. McLean I should say that I have heard that that has been rectified since. At the time I was there those were the complaints that were coming in.

21. What about the sanitary arrangements—are they better?—I am given to understand that they are as they were before, with this exception, that there is more water in the tunnel and the refuse is washed out. But, to the best of my belief, there is not a sanitary convenience in the tunnel to-day.

22. *The Chairman.*] You worked in the tunnel up to what time?—I never worked there. I have been in the tunnel only once.

23. Can you say whether the men do not give the same amount of work as they get farther into the hill, because of the length of the tunnel and the general conditions: I am speaking of tunnel-work?—Speaking as a miner—and I have been about seventeen years underground altogether—I should say that that would not make any difference, provided the conditions were made good. There is no reason why a man should not do just as much work three miles in as near the open air—that is, if the conditions are good.

24. *Mr. McLean.*] Why did you disband the union at Otira?—The chief reason was that it was a hundred miles from Reefton, and at that distance we could not manage the branch with that satisfaction we should desire. Linked with that reason was the number of accidents in the tunnel, which were a drain upon our funds. At that time we used to pay £1 a week out of the funds to a member who got injured at his employment, and the accidents at Otira were so frequent that we were very nearly going bankrupt. For £4, £5, or £6 coming from Otira fortnightly, we were sometimes sending £35 and £40 back.

25. Did you discover that the accidents were always genuine—that the money paid was genuinely due?—On all but one occasion I had not any reason to doubt. There was one occasion when a claim was made and the man was not entitled to anything.

26. Did you have any suspicion that claims should not be paid?—Yes, I did.

27. Was not that the chief reason that you disbanded?—I said at the opening that we were a hundred miles away and could not give the branch that attention we should have liked to give it.

28. You were in the tunnel yourself, were you?—I was there once.

29. What were the sanitary arrangements when you were there?—There were none at all.

30. What length of tunnel was driven then?—I should say, something over half a mile.

31. In your experience of underground work, do you not find it always the case that there is—and must be—a certain amount of inconvenience from the fumes of explosives?—A certain amount, but that certain amount could be greatly minimized by adequate ventilation.

32. Is not there a certain amount of inconvenience in every mine where explosives are used on account of the fumes?—It always takes some time for the smoke to clear away.

33. Is there not a considerable amount of inconvenience after an explosion in any mine?—The inconvenience depends upon the ventilation. There will always be some, but in a place that is adequately ventilated the fumes will not hang so long.

34. How long, in your experience, is it, after an explosion of a dozen holes or more, before you can get back to work in the face?—I have worked in places where you could get back in five minutes, and others where you could not get back for two hours.