

59. You are not speaking from your own knowledge, either as to the conditions or as to the air: it is merely from what you have heard rumoured?—It amounts to more than rumour when you are handling hundreds of men each year who have left there and tell you why they have left.

60. On the question of wages, do you mean to infer that the wages Mr. McLean gives are not good enough to induce men to go to work there?—I say that if the conditions were made good they are.

61. I am talking about wages only just now?—At that place now, under present conditions, he will never get men to stop. Some of the men will tell you, as the reason why they left, that the acetylene light affected their eyes; some that working eight hours a day in a wet place was too much; others that there was too much dynamite-smoke; others, too much water. But this seems to be the chief ground of complaint—that it is a bleak, cold place to live in, and they have to work seven days a week, because it takes them all day on Sunday to get sufficient wood to keep them warm. It is not a cheerful place to live in. I say that if the conditions were made good and cheerful there is no reason why Mr. McLean should not get plenty of men.

62. It is the conditions of life there and the conditions under which the men work, rather than the question of wages, that induces men to leave and go elsewhere: is that what you mean?—That is it. I believe it is the conditions rather than the wages.

63. *Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie.*] You are a member of the executive of the Miners' Federation, are you not?—Yes.

64. Did you get this information in connection with the Arthur's Pass Tunnel contract in your official capacity either as a member of that executive or as a member of the executive of the Reefton Miners' Union—I mean, the complaints from the men?—In my capacity as secretary of the Reefton Miners' Union, not as a member of the executive of the Federation. I have had no official communication from the Federation in connection with the Otira Tunnel at all.

65. Those complaints, therefore, have been made to you officially as secretary of the Miners' Union at Reefton?—Yes.

66. So it was not hearsay?—No. I have been urged at meetings to assist the West Coast Workers' Union to endeavour to better the conditions there—urged by men who have been at the tunnel and have come to Reefton to work.

67. *The Chairman.*] Do I understand you to say that the men leave Otira and work for a less wage than is paid at the tunnel?—Yes, they willingly work for less wages under better conditions. The mines at Reefton are better to work in than the Otira Tunnel.

68. *Mr. Veitch.*] I understood you to say that the men working in the Otira Tunnel do not work under the provisions of the Mining Act: is that so?—They work under the provisions of the Public Contracts Act.

69. If this work were brought under the provisions of the Mining Act would that have the effect of bettering the conditions of the men?—Undoubtedly, in my opinion.

70. Would you give it as your opinion that that is probably one of the reasons why the men prefer to work in other places?—Yes.

71. What do you call adequate ventilation?—When I say that a place is inadequately ventilated I mean that there are dynamite-fumes hanging about too long after an explosion.

72. You are working up a grade, are you not, in taking stuff out of the tunnel?—Yes.

73. Would that be a reason why extra ventilating facilities should be provided?—I should say that if you had a suction fan powerful enough, it would not matter if you were going up-grade.

74. Mr. McLean has given it as his opinion that certain trades-union officers in that district have done what they could to prevent men coming to work for him: do you know anything of that?—To the best of my belief that is incorrect, because if any step like that were taken the first place at which it would be put into operation would be Reefton, where there are miners about, coming and going to Otira. As far as I am concerned we know nothing at all about that in Reefton, and as far as I know it is untrue.

75. *The Chairman.* I will read you what Mr. McLean said. He was asked, "Could you give us these conferences in order of date?" and he replied, "The first one was with Mr. Malloy and a man named Kennedy. Then we had difficulty over lamps, and the men struck work because I insisted that they should be responsible for the destruction of these lamps, on account of which I had a conference with a man named Betts and the secretary of the Miners' Union there—a man named Fagan." Then he was asked if they were private conferences, and he replied, "This last one was a private conference, but at the previous one all the men were there. The next one was through another strike, and then I met Messrs. Semple, Webb, and Armstrong. This strike was called because we would not recognize the union connected with the Labour Federation while we were still bound by an award of the Arbitration Court to another union. That was also in the presence of the men. The next one was after the award had expired. They met me with a request to increase wages and improve conditions generally, and then it was Messrs. Webb and Armstrong—not in the presence of the men. I am not altogether finding fault with the men. It appears to me that labour is not available in sufficient quantity for a huge work like that at the present moment." And at another place he referred to a threat: "Then the president of the union stated openly to my brother and myself that they would send word round to the various unions under their jurisdiction, as well as to Australia, that Otira was not a place they would favour for workmen to come to"—Since I have been an officer of the Miners' Union in Reefton we have never made any attempt to prevent Mr. McLean from getting labour, and we never made an attack of that description. I have never been a party to an attack of that description upon Mr. McLean. Mr. Malloy's name has been mentioned. I think it must have been fully three years and a half since Mr. Malloy and Mr. McLean met officially. Mr. Malloy has not been connected with the union at Reefton for fully three years and a half.