

149. *Hon. Mr. Fraser.*] You say you have not charge of the Bealey end of the tunnel, but have you been into it?—Yes.

150. I understand from that portion of the evidence which has been given that the amount of work done at the Bealey end is small as compared with that done at the Otira end?—That is right.

151. Are you able to state from your knowledge of the tunnel as a whole whether it would be advisable in future operations to do any of the work at the Bealey end, or will the greater portion of the work have to be done from the Otira end?—The greater portion of the work will have to be done at the Otira end. I do not think there is any getting out of that at all. There are other reasons, but the principal reason is the pumping of the water back and keeping it back. It has to be kept back continuously, or you have to pump out some time before you go to work.

152. Was it anticipated when the contract was commenced that you could only work from the one end?—I do not know. I was not with the firm at that time.

153. *Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Does the contract require that the tunnel should be worked at both ends?—I do not remember.

154. Was it not anticipated that the contractors would work at the Bealey end?—Yes.

155. *The Chairman.*] How far do you think they would work from the Otira end?—They would have to do about four miles and a quarter.

156. Have you anything to say about driving the heading through before the work is completed from Otira to Bealey?—Before I could say anything on that, what would be the object?

157. As to that method of completing the tunnel which has been suggested?—It is not any quicker. In that system you can always keep up with the work if you have the men.

158. *Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Are you aware that when they start at the Bealey end they must stop the heading and the widening—Mr. McLean told us so?—No.

THOMAS KENNEDY, Machineman, Otira Tunnel, examined. (No. 8.)

1. *Mr. Seddon.*] You are working at the tunnel?—Yes.

2. What are you working as?—At present as a machineman.

3. How long have you been working there?—Since last January.

4. You are secretary of the union at Otira, are you not?—Yes.

5. How long have you been secretary?—For about four months.

6. How many men are there in the union at Otira?—I could not answer that offhand. There are men coming and going.

7. Nearly every one working in the tunnel is a member?—Yes, most of those in the tunnel.

8. With regard to the conditions of work in the tunnel: is the tunnel pretty wet in places?—Yes, very wet in places.

9. You might describe to the Committee the conditions in the tunnel—I mean, regarding the wet?—In some places it is dry and you can work without oilskins, but these places are not very numerous. In some places it is exceptionally wet: you can get wet through even if you have oilskins on. There are parts that are very wet indeed—it is just as though taps were pouring water down on you.

10. How are you dressed when you go to work in the tunnel?—We have just an ordinary suit of working-clothes on—oilskin leggings and oilskin coat and oilskin hat.

11. You do not always wear your oilskin coats, except in wet places?—Oh, yes, nearly everybody takes an oilskin coat in.

12. When it comes to a question as to whether a place is a wet place or not, how is that settled—is it left to the union, or is it left entirely to Mr. Gavin?—Seeing that there had been disputes with Mr. McLean, the union passed a resolution that it should be sole judge of wet places.

13. Has it ever done that?—No. Since Mr. Gavin has been there we have always been able to come to some arrangement as to what is a wet place.

14. And that has always been satisfactory to the men and to the contractors?—I would not say it has been satisfactory to all the men.

15. But, generally speaking?—Generally speaking, Mr. Gavin has satisfied us.

16. With regard to the bonus system, have you heard anything about that amongst the men?—The bonus system was in vogue when I went there first. A lot of the men did not like the idea of it at all, and Mr. McLean has done away with it, except in one part of the tunnel.

17. What objection had the men to the bonus system?—They seemed to think it was a coercion wage—that if he could afford to pay a bonus he could afford the wages. They seemed to think it was practically a sweating system.

18. *Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*] When you say a “coercion wage” you mean an exertion wage?—Yes.

19. *Mr. Seddon.*] There is a desire amongst the men, is there not, that the tunnel should be worked under the Mining Act?—Yes.

20. You might tell the Committee your reasons for that?—Personally I have not worked in mines, but I believe there is a Mining Inspector.

21. That is one reason: what are the others?—He would perhaps be judge of wet places, and so forth.

22. Is not the other reason that you want the bank-to-bank clause?—Yes, we want that, certainly.

23. Have you made representations to Mr. McLean about that?—Yes, we have asked for it. We have asked for a scale of wages, and so forth, but we have not got them.

24. Is it not a fact that you get higher wages at Otira than are paid in the mines on the West Coast?—Yes, I believe it is.