

54. Do you know if that ever has been done?—No notice has ever been sent to the union. A notice appeared in the *Maoriland Worker*, I think, at one time, stating that there was trouble pending at Otira: in fact, there is no necessity to send any notice to the miners' unions—they all know Otira too well.

55. Do you know of men working there any considerable time?—Yes, there are men there who were there before my time.

56. They are still there, are they?—Yes.

57. Are there many of them?—Not a great many.

58. Are they good men, do you know?—I believe they are.

59. They seem to be satisfied with the conditions?—I have never met one man who was satisfied.

60. They seem to be by remaining there?—Oh, well, economic necessity compels a man to remain in some very funny places.

61. You say it takes forty minutes to go in and come out. How long does it take the men to get to the faces, do you know?—Somewhere about twenty minutes.

62. How long does it take them to get out again?—Somewhere about that.

63. Have you ever seen any of them about at 4 o'clock?—You might find a few that walk out.

64. How do the men come out?—On trains.

65. How long does it take for the train to come from the lined part?—Not very long. I timed them on two occasions: once they were thirty-five minutes, and another time forty minutes.

66. *Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Each way?—No, both ways.

67. *Mr. McLean.*] There is a mile and a half of finished tunnel, is there not?—Yes.

68. What is the idea of claiming for time to count from the mouth of the tunnel right through the finished work—right to the work?—Because, in the first place, eight hours is quite long enough for any man to remain underground.

69. Whether the men are working or not working, it does not matter, as long as they go underground at all you claim they ought to be paid for the time?—Yes, and I do not think you will ever get a suitable class of men unless they are paid for it. They would be foolish to work there under worse conditions than prevail elsewhere.

70. *Hon. Mr. Fraser.*] You said that if the Government were to carry on this work under the conditions that you suggest the work could be done more expeditiously and more cheaply than at present: did I understand you to say that?—Yes, that is my opinion.

71. How do you arrive at that conclusion as far as less expense is concerned, seeing that you all through your evidence allege that the wages paid are inadequate for the work done under the conditions you refer to?—I believe that under altered conditions the best of men could be obtained, and in work of that description one good man might be as good as two poor ones. The only way in which you can get a suitable class of men for that particular kind of work is to give them the same conditions that prevail in other underground works. If you do not do that they will not stop there. And it is a serious thing to have a scarcity of underground workers, because when you are short-handed underground it is a dead loss, for you have to keep the whole staff and all the machinery going outside.

72. Did I understand you to say that the rate of wages paid by the contractors is still slightly in excess of that paid in any of the mines, notwithstanding the excessive hours that you refer to?—Slightly in excess of what is paid in some mines—not all mines. For instance, in Waihi, working for a contractor you get 11s. a day for forty-six hours a week, bank to bank. That is considerably more than is paid at Otira Tunnel.

73. Is the question of wage, then, the one that has entered into the minds of the workers very greatly with regard to disinclination to work at Otira?—The question of wages is not so much in dispute now as the general conditions under which the men work.

74. The question of wage is not one of the factors that have prevented men from working there, is it?—No. Of course, when we asked the contractor last year for an agreement, we asked that the minimum wage should be 10s. 6d. per day. 10s. a day has been the recognized wage on the West Coast for twenty years or more, and we contend that if a man is entitled to 10s. a day for working at a mine in the Greymouth or Hokitika district, surely he is entitled to another 6d. who will go and live in those mountains! So we were reasonable in our request.

75. Is the wage paid at Otira 6d. a day extra?—No. The minimum wage for labourers at Otira is just the same as has been paid on the West Coast for twenty years.

76. You said just now that the wage paid to the men there was slightly in excess of that paid in mines?—In some cases it is, to the underground workers.

77. What number of men are working outside the tunnel?—Quite a number.

78. I mean, relative to the number working inside?—There are more inside, considerably.

79. What proportion of the men are working outside?—At the Bealey end there are more outside than inside.

80. I mean at the Otira end?—It varies.

81. However, you do not allege that the question of wages has been an important factor in preventing the contractor from getting the men, but it is the conditions under which they work?—That is so.

82. What are the grievances of the men, would you mind repeating them?—That they work six hours a week longer than they do in other underground works; that they are continually quarrelling about wet places, which should be decided immediately by an arbitrator on the work; and that Sunday work is not paid for at the rate of double time or time and a half, as provided for in the Mining Act.

83. Is Mr. McLean the sole arbiter as to what is a wet place and what is not?—Yes.

84. Notwithstanding the fact that in the award it has been left to the Assistant Engineer?—That award has run out.