

194. With regard to ventilation, you have borne out what we have been told—that there is not much complaint about it?—I have not heard a great deal of complaint, but I contend that the ventilation should be improved.

195. How?—It could be improved by blowers, or by fans, or in some other way. I notice that in the tunnel where the machines are working the smoke is blown back and there it dies. Some of the men are working in an almost continual fog of smoke.

196. You think the conditions can be improved, then, as far as ventilation is concerned?—Yes, I think so.

197. *Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie*] With regard to the old award, do you think it could be enforced either on Mr. McLean or on the men?—I do not think it could.

198. Did your union ever take legal advice on the point?—No. There was nothing provided for, as far as we were concerned, so we did not bother.

199. Putting all past differences between your union and the contractors on one side and dealing only with the conditions existing at the present time, your principal complaint appears to me to be that the men are working six hours a week more at Otira than are worked in the ordinary mines of the country?—Yes.

200. If any one carrying on this work were to concede this six hours a week, do you think that would give the men entire satisfaction?—Not that alone.

201. I will add to the question, “and double time for Sunday work”: do you think that would give the men satisfaction?—Yes. I will briefly recapitulate what we asked for: in regard to hours of labour, forty-six hours a week; time to count from bank to bank; time and a half on Sunday; a Government official to arbitrate regarding wet places; and the ordinary preference clause. We did not ask for anything that had not been conceded in every mine in New Zealand.

202. Have you got preference to unionists?—In all the mines we have.

203. That is under the awards, is it?—Yes.

204. If those conditions were granted do you think it would give full satisfaction?—Yes.

205. Do you think it would give full satisfaction if preference to unionists was not granted?—I do not think there would ever be industrial peace.

206. Can you give the Committee any idea how much extra in wages it would cost per week or per day to grant the six hours that you ask for?—There would be more men, and you would get a better class of men. When the bank-to-bank clause was introduced into this country the same argument was raised, but we found in practice that the output of the men from the mines was just as high as before.

207. You will admit there is a certain amount of lassitude comes over a man after he has been at work certain hours underground?—Yes.

208. It has been held that a man can do practically as much work in six hours underground as he can in eight?—Yes; I believe that a man working underground can do all the work that is in him in six hours. No man is fit to work eight hours. If he is there eight hours he is not working hard, because it would be impossible.

209. The men at the tunnel have on several occasions asked to have this tunnel brought under the Mining Act?—Yes.

210. And the answer you got was that it would be impossible to do that because it would be a breach of the contract?—Yes.

211. You said that you could not understand why the tunnel was brought under the Quarries Act?—Yes.

212. Do you know that any contractor engaged on any work that is let by the Government or anybody else comes under any law that is passed by Parliament subsequent to the contract being let as far as that law affects him?—The Quarry Act was a new Act. Then I understand. I thought the tunnel had been brought under an old Act.

213. There are several Government Inspectors connected with the tunnel: do you know whether they have been appointed Quarry Inspectors as well?—I do not know.

214. Do you know whether the local engineer in charge of the tunnel-work is a Quarry Inspector?—No.

215. Do you know whether an Inspector under the Quarries Act has quite as much power, especially with respect to explosives, as an Inspector of Mines has?—We were not aware of those facts, and have never utilized the Inspectors.

216. You say you have seen gelignite lying about in the tunnel?—Yes. One man got blown up with gelignite while raking stuff down the tip-head.

217. Are percussion caps lying about also?—No, I never saw that.

218. Do you know what the Mining Regulations provide as far as explosives and percussion caps are concerned?—Yes. The caps must be kept separate and in airtight tins.

219. Are they not in charge of a qualified man?—They have to be kept in a magazine a certain distance from a travelling-road.

220. Is there not a limit to the quantity that can be brought into a mine each day?—Yes.

221. Do you know whether there is any limit to the quantity that can be brought into the tunnel each day?—I do not think there is any limit.

222. You said that you saw shots being tamped with old sacks?—Yes.

223. Does the contractor supply any material for tamping?—No.

224. Are you sure?—I have been so informed.

225. What is the material that the men usually tamp with?—Wet clay.

226. I want to find out if the contractor keeps the necessary supply of material handy for the men to use?—No, it is not there.

227. How often does the Inspector of Mines as a rule visit the various mines under his control—say, at Reefton or Waihi?—I have never worked in the mines at Reefton. In Waihi you might see the Inspector every week, perhaps oftener.