

progresses. In some cases wherever the difficulties of working a place reach a certain degree, the miner is paid the standard daily wage of his mine, which is in general 12s. a day plus bonuses. The miner pays for his tools, light, and explosives, some of which, however, are provided him by the company at prices much lower than the market prices. The miner is paid at an agreed rate for all timbering he may do. In addition to hewing he has to fill his trucks and take them to the flat, any distance up to a chain. Every three months there is held a cavel or ballot, according to which the working-places are allocated among the miners.

In some mines the truckers, who take the coal out from the miner's face to the pit-mouth, also work on contract at piece rates, but most truckers, as well as the other workers about a coal-mine, are paid a daily wage. All the mine workers obtain coal for their own use at a price much lower than the local market prices.

The eight-hours bank-to-bank principle is generally applied, with slight modifications in certain cases. The time actually put in at the working-faces varies with the travelling-distances underground. Double shifts are worked in some mines.

Wages are paid fortnightly. The miner's maximum working-time per fortnight is by custom regarded as eleven shifts, since "pay-Saturday" is traditionally an off day. The largest proportion of voluntary absence from work occurs during the early part of the week following pay-Saturday. This has sometimes been used as evidence in support of the contention that such absence is caused mainly by intemperance, though it is obviously the period during which the miner would find it most convenient to take time off voluntarily from whatever cause.

Disputes regarding wages and general conditions of work are settled by the process of collective bargaining between the company and the representatives of the men's union. Recently a system has been adopted for the reference of a dispute in the first instance to a local council of representatives of workers and employer, then, if necessary, to a similar district council, and in the last resort to a national council.

(viii.) *Housing and General Social Environment.*—The present condition of the housing-accommodation available for mine workers is described with some detail in Chapter VII. It is unnecessary to say more here than that a considerable number of the married miners live in their own houses, that at some of the mines a certain amount of house-room has been provided by the companies themselves for sale or lease to the workers, and that, however satisfactory the position is at some centres, in general it urgently demands improvement. This is true not only of the housing-accommodation itself, but also of drainage and other sanitary arrangements. The situation of the townships is in some cases such that many of the workers have an unduly long distance to travel, often over very inconvenient ways and with no satisfactory means of transport available. Generally there has been in the past insufficient co-ordinated efforts by all concerned to provide for needs beyond those of the moment.

Many of the mining townships are remote from the larger centres and the amenities of social life which they provide, with little or nothing to compensate for the absence of these or of the opportunities of enjoying them by means of rapid and cheap travel. In general, the companies have done a good deal to ameliorate the social conditions by providing recreation halls and grounds, clubs, libraries, &c., out of their own funds, but the general problem is too large to be solved by their resources alone, and is one, too, in which the whole community is concerned.

In only one or two cases, notably at Runanga and Blackball, has there been any attempt on the part of the miners to establish co-operative stores with the object of obtaining common commodities and services at the lowest possible prices.

Primary education is provided in the mining townships as part of the system common to the whole Dominion, no differentiation being made either against or in favour of these settlements. The miners in some of the townships share the serious disability in regard to the opportunities for the secondary education of their children which all people of similar means suffer in the more remote and sparsely settled districts. Technical instruction in mining and allied subjects is provided at those centres where there is a School of Mines (Westport, Huntly, Reefton) or Technical College, but these are few, and the majority of the mining population is without opportunities of this kind. Almost nothing has been done in the direction of instituting, even on the larger fields, some systematic general education of a nature suitable for adult workers, and the demand for W.E.A. and University extension classes, as well as for the lighter recreative forms of education, remains unsatisfied, largely because of lack of funds to provide the necessary teaching and equipment.

The health of the mine worker and his family, and his support during illness and injury, are the joint care of the workers themselves through their Medical Associations, the coal-mine owners, who contribute a statutory payment of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a ton to the Coal-miners' Relief Fund, and the Government and local bodies, which may subsidize or otherwise supplement the provision thus made. There is hospital accommodation on most of the coalfields, but in one or two instances local needs are not satisfactorily provided for. The provision that no worker shall be entitled to payment out of the Relief Fund unless he shall have been so disabled as to prevent him from working for not less than a week is both an encouragement to the malingerer and a grievance with the more conscientious miners.

(ix.) *State Aid in Mining.*—This is given directly, as by subsidies in aid of prospecting, loans for the development of mines, subsidies to Schools of Mines, the free loan of prospecting-drills, the advice of its Inspectors and officials of the Mines Department, or indirectly, as by the comparatively low rate of duty imposed on the import of mining machinery. The legislation affecting coal-mining is embodied mainly in the Coal-mines Act (1908, No. 24), and its amendments, and the regulations made under their authority.