COAL COMMISSION'S DAY

Breaker Boys and Miners Tell About Their Hardships.

One Cent for a Month's Work—No Compensation for Physical Injuries—Mr. Mitchell on the Stand.

SCRANTON, Penn., Dec. 13.—The miners called witnesses to-day before the Anthracite Coal Strike Commission to testify to the conditions existing at the collieries of the Philadelphia & Reading Coal & Iron Company. These were the first persons to appear against the company of which George F. Baer is the head. Considerable interest was manifested as to the character of the evidence the miners would peresent against that company. Eight witnesses were called, and the principal grievance presented was that some men who went on strike were discriminated against.

There were a large number of other witnesses called, but most of the testimony was of a cumulative nature, relating mostly to alleged unfair local conditions.

Among the witnesses heard was President Mitchell. His testimony related principally to the manner in which he computed the averages he gave yesterday, in which he showed that bituminous men received from 40 to 50 per cent. more wages than the anthracite miners. Counsel for the Delaware & Hudson disputed Mitchell's method of arriving at the averages.

The miners will close their case probably on Monday, when the operators will open their side. The coal companies have decided to present only one opening argument, and former Congressman Simon P. Wolverton, leading counsel for the Reading Company, will make the joint opening statement.

The presentation of the wage statements of the Scranton Coal Company was the first business to come before the commission today. The statements were presented by John B. Kerr, Vice President and General Counsel for the New York, Ontario and Western Railroad, which company controls the Scranton Company.

The statements show that during the year ending April 30, 1902, the company operated nine collieries. Two worked only eleven months on account of fire and flooding and one but 11½ months on account of the strike.

The average earnings of miners per year were $538.90 and of mine laborers $313.76. Average per breaker, day of ten hours, for miners, $3.13, and for miner's laborers, $1.82. The wages of other employes range from $1,200 per year for engineers down to $150 for breaker boys.

A breaker boy, aged ten, was called, and said that he received 65 cents a day. Last month he received only 25 cents, the remainder being kept by the Delaware and Hudson Company, which employed him, for rent.

He said he knew of one boy who received only one cent in a month. When he applied for work he misrepresented his age, but his mother has since given the company his correct age. He is still employed by the company.

Practically the entire afternoon session was taken up with the testimony of men who are, or have been, employed by the Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company. The principal grievance complained of by the witnesses examined was that of discrimination.

One man complained that he was not getting regular pay for repair work; another one said there were two sizes of cars where he worked, and only one price for both. Another, who lost his leg, complained that he was taken off light work and given heavy work, and that when he complained he was told that he must do it or get out. The men who did not get work after the strike gave as the company's reason that they took a too prominent part in the strike.

On cross-examination it was brought out that the general treatment of the witnesses by the company was good, except in the instances complained of, and that there was some friction between the men and the colliery Superintendent, of which John Veith, as General Mining Superintendent, had had no knowledge.

In this connection a miner named William Grett, employed at the Silver Creek Colliery, said he struck a bad heading and could earn little money. He complained to the foreman, but the latter made no effort to improve matters. Simon P. Wolverton, the Reading's attorney, asked him why he did not complain to Mr. Veith, and the witness replied that if he went over the foreman's or the colliery Superintendent's head to the General Mining Superintendent the other would get "even" with him.

James Clark, President of one of the local unions at Ashland, presented along with the miner's grievance those of the Teamsters' Union of Ashland, an organization entirely outside of the miners' union, but Chairman Gray would not admit them, saying the commission had enough trouble settling the miners' affairs.

A life insurance agent was called and gave the life insurance rates for miners and persons employed in other occupations. The rates for miners were very high.

The last witness of the day was a fifteen-year-old boy who lost a leg while working in a breaker owned by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. He said he received nothing for the loss of the limb.

It was the intention of the commission to sit until 6 P. M., but as the miners could not present all their witnesses by that time adjournment was taken at 5 o'clock until Monday morning.

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