

Mr. Sydney Jennings' evidence.

MR. SYDNEY J. JENNINGS, General Manager of the Crown Reef Gold Mining Company, stated he had been General Manager of the Company since the 1st September, 1896. Before then he was manager of the Crown Deep and Langlaagte Deep.

Chairman.

You know the line of enquiry the Committee is pursuing, and I would be pleased if you would give your own statement on the different points, and afterwards the Members of the Commission will put questions.

Pass Law.

Witness]. It seems to me the three chief points which affect the mines which are not on the verge of paying dividends are these. The first is native wages. We have here a most excellent law, in my opinion—namely the Pass Law—which, if properly carried out, and efficiently administered, will enable us to get complete control over our kaffir labourers. The Pass Law, as it is carried out at present, does not give any satisfaction. From the Crown Reef, where I am manager, no fewer than 1,030 kaffirs deserted since the 1st June, 1896, and it is impossible for us to trace these kaffirs. If we take a native to the Pass Office, and ask whether he has ever been registered before, it is impossible for the officials to give us any information. If every kaffir could be traced; if it could be told whether they have been registered before, or been in the service of a company, then we would have control over them. We can get kaffirs here from other places on a contract for twelve months, but they work for only two weeks and then leave, and it is impossible for us to find them. We have another law, which is a very good one, viz., the Liquor Law. When this law was first enforced, in January and February, we received great benefit from it, in that the kaffirs were never drunk, or suffering from the effects of drink, and consequently worked their full week, and did better work than at the present time. The Liquor Law is not enforced now, or the keepers of eating-houses, or dealers in drink think it will not be enforced, consequently the kaffirs now get, freely and openly, drink of the most vile compounds, and this makes them so that they cannot work as well as before. I have a list here which shows that the total sum paid in wages to kaffirs at the Crown Reef during 1896, amounts to £63,902, 6s. 1d., and this is about 24 per cent. of the total costs of the work. Then the cost of supplying the kaffirs with food was £12,503 for the same year, and this is nearly 1s. 3d. per ton, or 4½ per cent. of the total cost. Therefore, the native labour and native food amounted to 2s. 10d. per shift. If the Pass Law were properly and efficiently administered, and the Liquor Law likewise, we could reduce this to 1s. 6d. per shift. Again, if we had complete control over the native labour, we could teach the kaffirs to do all lower forms of work that are now done by white men. By these reductions other mines would be brought into operation, and more white men of greater skill would come into the country. The lower classes of labour, mostly unskilled, would be done by kaffirs. This would be a permanent benefit to the country in many directions. You would have more mines at work; you would cause more goods to be carried over the railroad, and the man who had invested his money in the mines would receive greater dividends. The second point is the cost of coal. The Crown Reef paid last year £25,909, 14s., which amounts to 2s. 7¼d. per ton. I am informed that we pay an average of 19s. per ton for coal. I am informed, but I don't know it of my own knowledge, that of that amount 9s. is carriage, or not quite one half. Therefore, if the carriage is reduced to a figure at which a great many think it possible to carry coal, it should be reduced by 6s. per ton, or, on our expenses, about one-third of our coal bill, or 10d. per ton working costs. The third point is dynamite. The Crown Reef spent on dynamite last year £24,225, which amounts to 2s. 5d. per ton, or 9 per cent of the total cost. Having had considerable experience in dynamite, I should say that dynamite

Liquor Law.

Native wages.

Coal.

Dynamite.

can be delivered here, exclusive of duty, at 36s. per case. The Crown Reef uses blasting gelatine, for which it pays £5 9s. 3d. per case, delivered on the mine. If we grant the dynamite should pay even a large duty, we should at least get it for half the amount we get it at now, which would mean a saving of about 1s. 2d. per ton at the Crown Reef. The other items of expenditure on the Crown Reef are made up of cyanide, and what might be called general stores, such as candles, steel, oils, pipes, and pipe fittings, fuses, and detonators. These all pay railway carriage, which, in my opinion, is very high, but of which I have no accurate statistics to give the Committee. With regard to white labour, the salaries on the Crown Reef include directors' fees, manager, consulting engineer, secretary, and every other white man working on the mine, came to £77,222, or 29 per cent. of the total cost. This amounts to £24 1s. 10d. per month per man. In my opinion, unless a great reduction is made in the cost of living, it is impossible to reduce that amount. It seems to me that the policy should be to open up and make it possible for a great many more mines to pay, so that we should be able to use more white labour of the very highest skill, to whom it would be cheap to pay a high wage. I would like to hand in this statement, so that the Commission will have accurate statistics so far as the Crown Reef is concerned.

Mining costs.

Salaries of Whites.

White wages.

Chairman.

What is the dividend paid by the Crown Reef?—We paid 140 per cent. on our capital, and in that connection I would like to make a statement. The capital of the Crown Reef is only £120,000. The total expenses of equipping and developing the mine in such a way that it is possible to pay dividends, was £480,000 odd. Therefore, the 140 per cent. dividend on £120,000 capital is only about 35 per cent. on the money spent in equipping it.

Dividends of Crown Reef.
Capital of Crown Reef.

As regards kaffir labour, there is no difficulty in getting a sufficient supply?—There is no difficulty if we can keep those we get.

Supply of native labour.

Your remedy for that is that the Liquor Law be properly carried out, and also the Pass Law?—Yes.

As regards white labour, have you any difficulty in getting skilled white labour?—It is very difficult to get skilled white labour.

Scarcity of skilled white labour.

Have you had any occasion to dismiss white labourers lately?—Yes.

Can you tell us how many and why?—About four or five, who have got sick or gone home, or wanted to go home to England.

Have you got any great trouble about stealing amalgam?—Not to my knowledge.

Is there any general complaint about I.G.B.?—Yes, the complaint is very great. It has been shown in the case of the City and Suburban that an organised gang of thieves has been at work, which, in that case, stole a large quantity of amalgam, and it is fair to assume that that is not the only company.

Gold thefts.

Is it not possible to improve the labour conditions by importing better machinery?—That has been done to the very highest extent by the Crown Reef Company.

Improved machinery.

Mr. Smit.

Has your company ever participated in any effort to import white labour?—No, not to my knowledge.

Mr. Joubert.

Is there any complaint about the quality of the dynamite made in this country?—Not that I have heard of. Not in my mine.

Quality of dynamite.

You work with dynamite?—We do not use dynamite at all. We use blasting gelatine.

Is it also manufactured here?—That I do not know.

Do you know where you get it from?—We buy it from the Explosives Company.

You have worked with different kinds of dynamite before in other countries. Is there any appreciable difference between these and that you work with now?—There is a large difference in the effect of blasting gelatine and dynamite.

You have worked with gelatine in different countries, you say. Is there any difference in the quality of the stuff you used there and the stuff you use here?—No.

Mr. Schmitz-Dumont.

Wages of married and unmarried miners.

Do you think that an unmarried miner gets a wage which enables him to live very well?—He gets a wage that if he is really single, that is living here without a wife, enables him to live well.

And how about the married miner?—It is very difficult for him to make both ends meet.

You have a lot of experience of the compound system in Kimberley?—Yes.

Compound system.

Would you think it would be advisable to apply the same here?—Taking all considerations, the commercial community and the good of the land into consideration, I should say no. We could get sufficient control over the kaffirs if the Pass Law was efficiently administered, without the compound system.

Native locations.

And how about establishing kaffir locations along the Rand?—I say it would be a most excellent idea if the sale of liquor in the locations was absolutely prohibited, and no licences were allowed for the sale of anything for a long distance round, so that there would be no possibility or pretext whatever of introducing drink.

I think you have experience of mining in America?—Yes.

Cost of dynamite in America.

Can you tell us the cost of dynamite there?—In the Alaska Treadwell and Alaska Mexican mines, which are very large concerns, the dynamite costs 15·3 cents per lb. (about 7½d. per lb.) That would amount to about 26s. per case.

Is that a quality which equals No. 1 sold here at 85s.?—That equals No. 1 sold here at 85s.

You mean to say it has the same power?—It has the same power.

Mr. Brochon.

Wages of unmarried miners.

You think a single man can live very well here with the salary he gets; can you tell us what he has to pay for his board and lodging?—It all depends on where he lodges. The average board on the mine is £5 10s. per month, I should say, but most of the mines furnish skilled men with quarters free, although some charge 10s. per month.

Is that all the expense?—He would have to clothe himself and he would have to have some amusement I suppose.

His salary we will take as your average, for the miner it will be about £20. You told us he paid £5 10s. for his board and 10s. for lodging, that makes £6. That leaves him £14 out of which he has to pay for clothes. How much do you think that might be?—I would think about £5 per month. I am merely estimating how much, but of course a miner could tell you with more accuracy than I could.

How much do you think he saves a month?—I should say about eight or nine pounds.

Wages of married miners.

When a man is married the mines do not give him free lodging?—No, not as a rule.

So he has naturally large expenses?—Yes.