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Selected extracts

8179. Can you tell us how many women you represent?

In our Union we have about 250 to 260, but in the trade of ropemakers, in the East End, there are about 1,000, and of juteworkers about 1,500.

...

8182. I presume you have no connexion with the industry yourself?

I have worked in the rope-making trade, not in England, but in New Zealand.

8183. How came you to be connected with it in England?

From my work in the East End. I was in connexion with Miss Black of the Women's Trade Union Association – and they, knowing that I knew something of the trade, elected me as their secretary, and I have been their secretary since the formation of the Union, two years ago.

8184. But you are a lady of independent means, are you not?

Not at all. I am the wife of a working man, and the mother of sons and daughters who all have to work for their living for a weekly wage.

...

8194. And it is an unhealthy employment, on account of the irritation of the chest, resulting from the inhalation of dust, and so on?

Yes; the women themselves are fresh robust-looking women generally, but they have frequently to go to the hospital with some disease of the chest, caused by swallowing the dust. In working the jute the room is very often like a cloud, full of the floss that is flying, and their clothes and their hair are all quite full of it when they come out. It is quite evident to anyone that when women are working under the conditions which their appearance when they come out shows they do, it must be unhealthy.

...

8228. You think there is a good deal of intimidation then?

Yes. We are quite prepared to prove there is intimidation on the part of the employers towards these women to prevent them joining unions.

8229. Is there any intimidation of the union women against the non-union women?

No.