

are dependent on conditions which experience shows do not exist in this colony. We feel it our duty to state in the plainest way that there is no unlimited coal supply in New Zealand, but that, so far as is known at present, the supply is comparatively small, and will be all wanted for the colony's requirements. Of course there is a possibility that further research may find large deposits, but at present those deposits are not known, and should not be depended on. These observations are made with reference to the coal-deposits of New Zealand generally, and also with reference to the Buller Coal Reserve in particular.

The success which has attended the harbour works at Westport is very gratifying, showing skill in design and execution. Vessels drawing 18 ft. to 20 ft. can safely enter the harbour, and as much as 3,000 tons has been taken out in one vessel. The town of Westport has trebled its population during the last fifteen or sixteen years, and its permanence and prosperity depends very largely on the coal-industry. Coal and gold are practically its only resources, for nature has denied it any land fit for agriculture or grazing. Gold-mining has been hitherto subject to the periodical "booms" and lulls generally incidental thereto, although there are very promising indications that it will develop some day into great importance. In the meantime coal is the foundation upon which the place exists, and should a failure in supply take place, very serious indeed will be the consequences, not only to the individuals comprising the population, but also to the colony generally, which would have to find any deficit in the interest on the Harbour Board loan.

A full inquiry was held by us at Denniston as to the inspection, control, and management of the Westport Coal Company's mines, at which the owners of the mine and the Miners' Union, representing the men employed underground, were present by their authorised agents.

Certain specified charges were made by the Miners' Union, which may be summarised as under:—

1. Want of proper ventilation.
2. Allowing inexperienced persons to have charge of a coal-face.
3. Want of two separate outlets to mine fit for men to travel.
4. Closing Big Dip section of Coalbrookdale Mine before coal extracted.
5. Specially charging the Inspector, Mr. Tennent, with allowing the matters above alleged to exist.
6. Specially charging Mr. Tennent with communicating the names of persons complaining of matters connected with the mines, and thus contravening section 44 of "The Coal Mines Act, 1891."

*Ventilation of Mine.*—At Granity Creek we found the mines well ventilated, and from inquiries we personally made from the men we believe that no cause for complaint exists. William Madison, the secretary of Granity Creek Miners' Union, who has other causes of complaint against the company in respect to machine-working, says he worked four years at Dip and Rise sections of Granity Creek Mine, and found the ventilation very good in all parts. William Davidson, who, in conjunction with Madison, acted as check-inspector for the men, says that everything was in good order. The evidence taken on this head was very short, as there appeared to be a genuine feeling of satisfaction among the men employed in this mine, with the company, and the way it provided for their health and safety.

*Means of Exit.*—We found ample provision under this head, and no complaint was made. We took pains to ascertain from the men, in an informal manner, whether there was any ground for complaint, and whether there was any apprehension on their part that harm would befall them if they communicated anything against the management, and we satisfied ourselves that in Granity Creek no such causes existed.

*Denniston Mines: Ventilation.*—These mines have been working for nearly twenty years, and we are of opinion that in past years there were occasions in which ventilation was deficient. Many causes contributed to this—want of experience being probably the chief. The company, even when their prospects were the reverse of cheerful, appear to have been liberal in the outlay of money, and want of funds, too often the excuse for bad work in mining-ventures, has not been alleged by or against them. Messrs. Foster, Dellaway, Patz, Cadman, Brown, and Moye, all miners employed in the mines, speak of the air being bad on occasions, but no formal complaint was made to the management, and, generally speaking, if a miner complained to the underground-manager, the defect was remedied. Foster says, "I believe men have come home from want of air. We did not represent this to the Inspector, as we had lost confidence in him." The incident in the Cardiff Mine, *re* Beirne and others' letter to the Minister of Mines, is given as the reason for loss of confidence; but we think that, as this was a solitary instance of letters being divulged, a little too much stress is laid on it by the men, and their natural independence, coupled with the freedom with which they criticise the action of the company, rather repels the idea that they were afraid to speak. Patz, the secretary of the Union, and one of the check-inspectors, says, "The Lady Glasgow section was bad twelve months ago. Menzies' Jig was improved recently, after attention of mine-manager was drawn to it. I complained to Dunn (underground manager). You will find it reported in book, and it was remedied. I have no other instances to cite. I have been check-inspector for the men, and when I found fault I complained. I do not know if my complaints have all been attended to. I wrote my report in company's books." The reports of the check-inspector were put in before us—they extend from October, 1898, to December, 1900, and are signed by Messrs. Hollows, Little, Patz, and Moye, according as the inspection was made. These reports have such a bearing on the charges made against the management that though we do not quote them at length in this report we desire to call special attention to the evidence in which they appear. If these reports are to be depended on there is no ground for a charge of neglect in respect to ventilation by the management.

The Inspector, Mr. Tennent, says, "I first inspected Denniston Mines, July, 1897, and afterwards every two or three months. I found general ventilation good. I have seen an odd place