

329. Supposing you were going through a bord and you saw one of the miners—say, a new-chum—do something which you considered would endanger the lives or limbs of his fellow-workmen, would you not report that?—Most decidedly.

330. And would you not do the same with a man working at the machines?—Most decidedly I would report him if I saw he was endangering the life of another man.

331. If you saw an incompetent man working in the mine would you report him?—No; I have no authority. I am only a check inspector.

332. *Mr. Cottrell.*] Is it not a fact that you do not consider you ought to put anything down about a man working a machine?—That is what I have been trying to explain all the time, that I do not report anything about men working the machines. I would have to put something down where I thought a man was endangering the lives of others.

333. *Mr. Proud.*] In making your inspections did you travel the return airway?—Yes.

334. How did you ascertain the quantity of air: did you measure it?—The amount of air is booked.

335. Do you think an experienced miner should be in charge where the machines are at work?—Yes, especially where a lad is under his control.

336. If deputies and miners had certificates, do you think it would be a good thing?—Yes; that would be a step in the right direction.

337. Did you ever see the coal come down on the coal-cutter while it was at work?—Yes, on one occasion I saw the coal come down on the machine.

338. Do you think larger or cleaner coal is got by the machine than by hand-work?—No; I do not think the machine makes nearly such clean coal as the miner does.

339. Did you ever observe black-damp during your inspections?—No.

340. Do you consider that where mechanical haulage is employed there should be a separate road for the men to travel in and out?—Yes.

JOHN FOSTER, Miner, examined.

1. *Mr. Cottrell.*] You are a miner, residing at Denniston?—Yes.

2. How long have you been here, eight years, within a few months.

3. Almost constantly employed in the mine?—Up to three years ago. I have been check-weigher for the men since that time.

4. You are also president of the Denniston Industrial Union of Workmen?—Yes.

5. I think some time ago you, acting in conjunction with the secretary, laid a charge against Mr. Tennent, the Inspector of Mines, on behalf of the union?—Yes, by resolution passed by the union.

6. What did you base the charge on? One has reference to ventilation: can you say anything about the ventilation in the mine?—The ventilation, so far as I understand and have been told, is very bad. Men have frequently had to go home on account of the bad ventilation.

7. Has this been represented to the Inspector? If not, why not?—I do not think so; because we have not got that confidence in the Inspector that workmen should have.

8. Have you had any reason for losing confidence in him?—Yes; at the time we did complain to him about the roadway, at the time the Big Dip was in existence. He told us in the correspondence that if he forced the travelling-road the company would shut down the mine.

SIR,—

Denniston, 6th September, 1899.

Acting under instructions from our executive committee, we beg to reply to your letter of 22nd August, as follows:—

We, on behalf of the Denniston Coal Miners' Union, formulate the following charges against Mr. Robert Tennent, Government Inspector of Mines, and would respectfully request that an exhaustive inquiry be held on the same. The following are our charges, viz.:—

That Mr. Tennent is not a fit person to act as Inspector of Mines, as his conduct in the past has shown, and we will endeavour to substantiate the following charges at any time an inquiry may be held.

That Mr. Tennent shows distinct apathy to the health and well-being of the workmen in our coal-mines in not seeing that a proper system of ventilation is carried out, thereby causing persons to become unconscious at their work, and such persons have had to be carried out of the working-places to be resuscitated.

That Mr. Tennent distinctly shirks his duty in allowing inexperienced persons to have charge of a coal-face, with a boy or youth under their control. This is quite a new procedure, as in the past none but experienced miners were allowed charge of any coal-face. By such practices as this we may say that occurrences as described in the foregoing paragraph take place.

That Mr. Tennent distinctly shows favour to the proprietors of the Denniston Mines by not compelling them to provide two separate outlets to the mine, fit for workmen to travel, in accordance with section 40 of the Coal-mines Act, and also that Mr. Tennent puts an altogether wrong construction on this clause. In relation to the above, we would respectfully draw your attention to the copy of Mr. Tennent's letter bearing on this question already forwarded to you.

That Mr. Tennent distinctly shirked his duty in allowing the Big Dip section of the Coalbrookdale workings to be closed down, knowing, as he ought to have done, that thousands of tons of valuable coal were being sacrificed by this action.

We charge Mr. Tennent with acting in direct contravention of section 44 of the Coal-mines Act. Therefore no coal-miner or workman has the temerity to communicate to him any breach of the Act they may from time to time observe under fear of being dismissed. This being so, it is the workmen who suffer, seeing that Mr. Tennent only visits these mines about once—one every three months.

Trusting that you will give this your earliest and careful consideration,

We have, &c.,

JOHN FOSTER, President.
JAMES PATZ, Secretary.

The Hon. the Minister of Mines, Wellington.

(1919.)

Mines Department, Wellington, 5th October, 1899.

In reply to your letter of the 6th ultimo, formulating charges against Mr. Robert Tennent, Inspector of Mines, I have to state that it has been arranged that Mr. Hawkins, S.M., shall inquire into the charges and report thereon.

H. J. H. ELLIOTT, Under-Secretary.

Mr. John Foster, President, and Mr. James Patz, Secretary,
Denniston Independent Union of Workers, Denniston.