

9. In reference to the road, what do you say about it?—I was check-weighing at the time, but I am under the impression that the travelling-way would have cost very little money to have kept open.

10. Were any further steps taken after the receipt of this letter by your union?—I had a private conversation with Mr. Tennent on the matter. I met him one day on the track when going to town, and he spoke to me about it. His conversation was in support of this letter. I thought the matter over, and on Saturday afternoon spoke to him again about it. I told him then that I did not think his views were consistent with reason—that the Act said distinctly that those inlets and outlets had to be made within twelve months after the mine was open, and that it was not reasonable that the company should have them where they liked. The union then took the matter up, and laid the charges against him with the department.

11. Have you any other reason for having no confidence in him?—Yes. When Beirne got discharged at Mokihinui we came to the conclusion that we had no right to place any confidence in him under fear of dismissal.

12. What was his conduct like towards the men throughout the mine?—I do not know that he ever had anything to say to the men at all. I might state, for the information of the Commission, that when Mr. Tennent was placed in the position he holds there were six unions on the West Coast, five of which voted against him and one for him. When he asked us for our support we refused it.

13. *The Chairman.*] Had you any previous experience of him?—The general opinion of the miners was that he was not the man to suit them.

14. What was his previous experience; had he been working here?—I have no doubt that, so far as experience goes, he is capable of holding the position with any man in New Zealand.

15. Where was he employed in the district?—At the Brunner Mine, as deputy or overseer.

16. As far as you know, this is his first appointment as Inspector?—Yes, as far as I know.

17. *Mr. Cottrell.*] With regard to the two separate outlets, do you wish to say anything about them?—I do not think the Act is carried out in that respect in any part of the mine. It might be carried out in the Cascade. There is one travelling-road as required by the Act.

18. Do you consider it necessary?—Yes, it is necessary in any mine to have two roadways.

19. For what reason?—That a man should not be imprisoned there at the mercy of the company to say when he should come out.

20. And you are not allowed to walk on the main road when the road is working?—Certainly not.

21. *The Chairman.*] Do I understand you to say that it is impossible for a man to get out of the mine while the rope is working without infringing the Act?—Yes; if the rope is travelling.

22. Are there no back headings he can go out of?—Not that I am aware of.

23. Is there a return airway?—Yes; but the return airway does not constitute a back heading or travelling-road.

24. *Mr. Cottrell.*] What is the quality of the air in the return airway?—The quality should be good until you are at the first working-face, and then you would get all the refuse from the working-places. The return airway leads to the surface, far distant from the point of ingress.

25. Now, with regard to Hart's case. Tell us as concisely as possible the history of that case?—It was reported to me that young Hart had got hurt. The first intimation I got was that he had been carried out of the mine to Ryan's Hotel. Immediately I heard of it I saw the doctor and he told me it was a very serious case, and that he (Dr. Reid) had ordered him to the Westport Hospital. We had two inspectors appointed by the men at that time, to see to all accidents when they occurred. I saw them immediately, and asked them if they had seen the place where the accident occurred, and they said No, that they had never been sent for. I might say that there is a clause in our agreement that the two accident inspectors shall be sent for at the same time as the manager is sent for, to view the place where an accident has occurred. That is provided for in clause 22 of the industrial agreement of the 1st January, 1900, between the Westport Coal Company and the miners. The accident happened on the 17th August, 1900. I saw the inspectors the morning after the accident, and I believe they went in with Mr. Sowerby, the mine-manager.

26. What did you do?—On the following morning they came and reported what they had found. They reported on the Wednesday. There was a meeting of miners, and I and Mr. Patz were appointed to go down and see the boy. We went the next day (Thursday) and found him in the hospital. We had asked permission from the doctor to interview the boy. We questioned the lad as to the state of the place where he got hurt, and he told us distinctly there was only one sprag that had been put up, about 6 ft. from the rib-side—that is, the wall side. He said he was working at the time with a man named Bruhn. They had taken out two cuts, which constitutes about 7 ft. wide each cut, and in taking out the third cut the coal came away and crushed him.

27. What state did you find the boy in after the interview?—The doctor's evidence was that it was "a very narrow squeak."

28. On returning to Denniston did you have another meeting of the union?—Yes.

29. And was this letter authorised to be sent to Mr. McGowan, Minister of Mines?—Yes.

SIR,—

Denniston, 14th August, 1900.

Acting under instructions from my Union, I respectfully beg to bring the following under your notice:—

Under the new system of coal getting in Denniston men are allowed to have charge of "coal-faces" who know practically nothing of coal-mining, and, in addition to this, the men have lads under their charge for whose safety, we contend, they should be responsible. Now, as I said before, these men being non-practical, and knowing nothing whatever of coal-mining, have not the slightest knowledge of the danger they run in working at a coal-face which is not properly timbered and spragged. Quite recently a very serious accident occurred under similar circumstances to those set forth. A place was being holed or undercut by a coal-holing machine, with a lad shovelling slack, when a great portion of the coal-face fell, seriously injuring the lad, who had to be carried out of the mine and conveyed to the Westport Hospital, where he now lies. The cause of this accident, we contend, is that, as I remarked before,