

pipe or matches on some part of the ship or on the wharf. It is done in the ammunition-factories, and they never have any trouble; but the greatest danger is carrying loose matches in the pocket, and that a man might do although he never dreams of smoking, and that may be more dangerous than even smoking?—We do not work our men as in an ammunition-factory: we have, say, fifty men working one ship to-day, and to-morrow have other fifty men working another, and it is not exactly the same.

99. I was not comparing the two employments in any way, but as a method of managing the work. What I want to point out is that in one case it may be insisted upon and there is no offence to the employees, and I do not see why it should not be provided for in this case?—I quite agree with you. I have not the least doubt that wax matches especially are the cause of some fires.

100. When you detect a man smoking, of course, he knows it is against orders?—Oh, yes, he does.

101. What do you tell him?—Tell him to go on shore.

102. You do not prosecute him?—No, we have not done so in the past—we think it is a minor offence.

103. And yet it has been thought worthy of special legislation?—Oh, yes, in special trades—it depends on the trade.

104. Many people think special legislation should be brought in in regard to it?—I have no objection.

105. What is the good of legislation if you do not punish the men—you can now?—Oh, yes, we can now, but we have never done so.

106. *Captain Blackburne.*] Would that man be employed again?—Not if we knew it—that is a sort of black mark against that man's name. As a rule we have no trouble with the ordinary stevedore men in that respect.

JOHN HERBERT SQUIRES recalled and resworn. (No. 66.)

107. *The Chairman.*] I understand you were to-day to bring your log-book with reference to the state of the weather in Wellington when the "Rimutaka" was loading?—Yes.

108. Have you got it?—Yes.

109. What was the first date of loading?—The first day of loading was on the 4th May; we started loading general cargo in No. 5 hold, which means flax or tow or anything of that sort. At 8 o'clock that morning there was a moderate breeze, overcast, and fair weather; at 12 o'clock there was a fresh breeze, overcast, and showery. The men knocked off from 12 o'clock to 1 o'clock for dinner, and resumed loading at 1 o'clock in No. 5 hold, and at 3.30 they finished loading Nos. 4 and 5 holds. At 4 o'clock there was a strong wind, overcast, and showery.

110. That was on the 4th May?—Yes. On the 5th May we started loading into No. 5 at 8 o'clock, and there was a light breeze and fine clear weather. At 12 o'clock the weather was the same, and then from 12 to 1 o'clock the stevedores again knocked off for dinner, and at 4 o'clock the wind was just light, with fine clear weather.

111. Any more rain?—No, no rain the whole of that day. On the 7th May—the Monday—we finished No. 5 hold at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, and the next morning at 8 o'clock there was a moderate breeze, overcast, and light continuous rain. At 8.30 the rain stopped, and the stevedores resumed loading Nos. 1 and 5 holds. At 12 o'clock there was a moderate breeze, with overcast, and occasional showers. Of course they stopped work at 12 o'clock, and at 12.30 the rain stopped during the luncheon hour. At 1 o'clock the stevedores commenced loading again into Nos. 1 and 5 holds. At 4 o'clock there was a fresh wind, overcast, with occasional rain-squalls. At 5 o'clock the hold was finished for good.

112. Finished altogether?—Yes. We sailed a couple of days after that.

113. Was that the finish of your loading in Wellington?—No, we were loading afterwards in other holds, but not in No. 5, and No. 5 was where the fire took place.

114. Was that the only hold where a fire took place?—Yes.

115. And that hold was not opened again after the 7th?—No.

116. What custom do you follow when you have that showery weather?—Well, the same as I told you in Wellington about putting a tarpaulin down the centre of the hatch—that is, if we work through it. If it is very bad we do not work through it.

117. You put some hatches on and then the tarpaulin across it?—It is down in the hold on top of the stuff itself. If we put some hatches on it would interfere with the work, so that when it is raining too hard we cannot work that way.

118. Well, assuming that some of the water does get on to these tarpaulins, how does the water run off?—We hoist the tarpaulin up by the four corners, and it is emptied on to the deck into the scuppers.

119. And not allowed to escape into the hold?—No, we are very particular about that. In fact, where the fire started there could not have been any water got to it—the wool was dry when it was put in.

120. Did you see any wool get damp when going aboard during the showers?—The wool will not get damp going from the shed to the ship's hold; there would be hardly enough time to notice it, because I have seen a bale of wool when loading in Waitara on one occasion either in the "Rakaia" or "Waikato" under trying conditions, I have seen a bale go down into the water and then be hoisted up again, and after being cut open we found the water had not penetrated more than half an inch inside the cover. I think it is because the wool is pressed so hard that the water does not penetrate.

121. *Mr. Foster.*] And, of course, the outside edges of the wool are freer to soak up the water than when you get further in?—Yes. Of course, there is a tremendous pressure on these bales, and when the bands cut into them they keep them in that position all the time.