

other impurities, and are safe for workmen to enter and work therein; and, in case firedamp or other impure air is discovered in any working-place, road, or level, the fireman shall in the first instance thoroughly clear the same from such impurity, if that can be done easily, and shall thereupon report to the miners and other workmen that the same are safe; but if the impurity cannot be readily or at once cleared out, the workmen shall not be permitted to enter such working-places, roads, or levels until the impure air has been, by further appliances, entirely dispelled. He shall prevent workmen entering the roads or working-places until a report has been made that they are safe, and shall see that proper caution-boards are put up when necessary. If no firedamp, chokedamp, or other impurity shall be discovered or suspected to remain after such inspection, the fireman shall so report to the workmen, and allow them to proceed to work, and shall thereupon without delay enter such report in the mine report-book." So you see the firemen provided for in this Act have nothing to do with the shot-firers?—That seems quite satisfactory.

12. At the same time the duties they have to perform are of such a very important nature that they ought to have some such certificate as that provided for to show that they have had the necessary experience?—Yes, that is so. The Auckland employers ask that in section 6 of the Bill, line 3, the five years' experience mentioned should be altered to three years. I might say that the time at our disposal since the Bill became available has not permitted us to give it much consideration. That is all I have to say.

13. *Mr. E. H. Taylor.*] I should like to ask what the employers' real objection is to having this clause put in relative to medical examination?—I stated the objection just as clearly as I could. Perhaps you will more particularly draw my attention to what is referred to, so that I may explain.

14. Would any of your employers think it necessary to have a medical examination to see whether they were fitted to enter into any business operation?—In what way? In mining?

15. Outside of mining, or in anything else?—No. Why should an employer be medically examined?

16. Then why the employee?—The employer is not working in the mine, and there is a very great difference between an employer and a workman. The employer is not covered by the Workers' Compensation Act. Neither the State nor any one else has any responsibility in connection with the employer meeting with an accident or anything going wrong in that way. The State and employers have very considerable responsibility in regard to accidents to the workers, and that at once offers, I think, a very valid reason why the right of medical examination should be retained by the employer.

17. *Mr. Colvin.*] If a man were medically examined on entering a mine, do you not think it would be a fair thing that he should be medically examined on leaving the mine to go somewhere else, to ascertain if he is medically fit?—If a man meets with any accident in a mine he has only to report himself.

18. Supposing I left the Denniston mine and went down to Granity and asked for a job, to get which I must be medically fit, should I not be able to get a certificate that I was medically fit from the first mine?—I think, in the majority of cases, when a man goes from one mine to another, he finds that the medical certificate is effective. I do not think the employers are going to use this factiously—they have not done so in the past. If a man is injured in a mine in an odd case he might not be aware of it, but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he would know.

19. You mentioned a case where a man might be slightly ruptured and afterwards go out of the mine: do you not think he should be medically examined then, because he met with the accident in that particular mine?—Our experience is that men know when they have been ruptured to some extent, but they get over it and do not let their employers know of it when they go into a mine. It is very rare for a man not to know when he has been ruptured.

20. Some young men do not understand, and they get away after receiving a slight injury which develops into a rupture?—Our experience is that men covered by the Workers' Compensation Act make a claim when there is not much wrong with them, even when there is only a small cut.

21. Can you tell me the number of men who are medically examined in the mines in New Zealand?—I said at the outset that the Westport Coal Company was the only company I knew of which made a practice of medically examining their men. Other employers find it sometimes necessary to examine their men before putting them on.

22. Do men apply to be exempted from the Workers' Compensation Act?—No. There are cases where a man does not look strong, and the employers say to him, "I am a little frightened of you: you had better go and get examined."

23. Have you heard of such cases?—Yes, a few cases; and in other businesses outside of coal-mining I have known an employer ask that a man should be medically examined before he is allowed to risk his life at particular work.

24. You know that there is great feeling amongst the Westport Company's employees about the medical examination?—Yes, I know now; but for years there was no trouble. It is a manufactured feeling.

25. The men did not know for three months that they were being medically examined. The old hands in the mine did not know when they began to examine them casually as they came up, and the new hands on being examined thought it was a rule at the time?—Yes, as it was.

26. There were four or five hundred men working there that were never examined?—I do not believe the employers would object very much now if pneumoconiosis were taken out of the Workers' Compensation Act.

27. Did you ever hear of that disease affecting a coal-miner?—I do not know of a case in any mine that has been tried.

28. *Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie.*] You say that the Westport Company is the only company that insists on its men being medically examined?—As far as I know.