

132. Did you see that that was put in order?—The manager has arranged to put in an electric signal from the brace into the engine-room.

133. How long is it since your attention was drawn to that?—About two months ago.

134. Is it in now?—I cannot say.

135. *Mr. Dougray.*] You made reference, in connection with Steel's place, that the miners' union had cancelled their registration and you had no power to act as arbitrator: does the Arbitration Act give you power to act as arbitrator, or is it only the agreement which gives you that power?—They had an award with the company.

136. *Mr. Reed.*] Will you explain the matter in connection with the signal?—The necessity for the signal was brought under my notice, and on reading Special Rule 87 I believed that I had power to ask the manager to provide the signal. Afterwards, on more carefully reading the rule, I came to the conclusion that I had no such power. If you will look at the section you will find that it reads, "When persons are about to descend the banksman shall signal three times, which the onsetter shall answer by signalling once."

137. *The Chairman.*] Why should the onsetter signal an answer?—It is a rule that when any person is about to ascend or descend the opposite cage must be clear of any trucks. The object of the answering signal is for the onsetter to leave that cage clear, and he must signal once before the engine-driver can move that cage.

138. If the banksman signals the onsetter, does not the onsetter signal to the engine-driver?—Yes.

139. So that the lowering signal comes from the banksman to the onsetter, and from the onsetter to the engine-driver?—It is from the bracman on the top to the onsetter in the chamber at the bottom of the shaft that persons are about to descend, and he signals through so that the cage may be clear, and then the onsetter signals "All right."

140. To whom does he signal?—To the engine-driver.

141. *Mr. Reed.*] Now, will you explain this little misunderstanding: in conversation with the manager and after consulting the Act you found that your first letter to the union was not correct—that you were not able to compel the company to put the signal in?—Yes, I talked the matter over with the manager, and after referring to the Act I found I was in error. Then, the same evening I had other business with the miners' union committee—

142. Who was present?—Mr. Duncan, Mr. Fulton, and, I think, the treasurer. We talked the matter over and I pointed out that under the rule I had no power, but that the manager had agreed to put in an electric bell.

143. Did you tell the union officials what had previously transpired at your conference with the manager?—Yes.

144. Can you fix the time and place?—No, but it was the evening of the day I arrived here, and I had the conversation with the union officials in the union's office.

145. *The Chairman.*] At what hour?—I went along in the evening, and they asked me to come in.

146. Was it on the 6th? Apparently you made an inspection on the 7th, and the letter is dated the 13th?—In all probability it was on the 6th of the month following the date of my letter, the evening before the inspection.

JOHN EDWARD DUNCAN sworn and examined. (No. 13.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A miner, and check inspector for the union.

2. How long have you been mining?—About twelve years.

3. How long have you been check inspector?—Nine months.

4. Which mine do you work in?—Ralph's.

5. Are you workmen's inspector for both mines?—Yes, with another.

6. Now, will you tell us as briefly as possible what it is you wish to lay before the Commission?—Well, first of all we consider that the report of the examination of the mine should be placed at the mine-mouth prior to the men going below, for the reason that the men may be lowered down into danger. Some time ago we wrote to the Inspector of Mines asking that there be installed a signal from the bracman to the engine-driver. I received a reply that he would see the manager and ask that the signal be put in, but it has not been done yet. It is necessary to have a signal, because the steam gets in the line of vision. We consider that the contract system and the tonnage system should be abolished, because under them the men rush their work and do not look to their safety as much as they would if they were employed on day wages.

7. Is that the fault of the price or the system?—It is the fault of the competitive system. The men undercut the prices to get the work. Then there is the matter of the travelling-way on the north side of the Extended Mine. The men travelling to the north side have to cross the main way, and there is danger in doing so. I believe that one of the men narrowly missed meeting with an accident on this particular crossing, and we consider that an overcast should be put over to avoid the risk. Then, again, the Inspector of Mines, when he examines the mine, should report to the union, because the members of the union consider that their lives are at stake. As matters are at present we have no means of knowing what condition the Inspector considers the mine is in. Under an agreement under the award by which we are working we cut and hole out coal to a depth of 3 ft., but in most instances it is cut to that depth, and the danger of accident is very great because the miner is working in a congested area. During the last year we have had twenty-five accidents which have put the men on the funds, and six very serious ones during the last two years. Four men have lost the sight of their eyes in these mines.

8. How would this holing, and cutting, and trimming the sides and roof be affected if you blasted the coal out?—You would not be working in a small place with your head in a cut. You would have some freedom, and more chance of averting an accident.