

46. What is your practice in Castle Hill now?—We do not need many shots there—about a shot a shift is sufficient for us.

47. Do you still leave it below, or have you received any fresh instructions on the subject?—No, I have had no fresh instructions.

48. *Mr. Reed.*] Were you aware that you were breaking the law when handing the explosives over to the following shift?—No, I thought it was all right, as long as we had the ammunition in tins.

49. The Act states that it shall not be taken for use into the workings of the mine except in quantities actually required during the shift. Did you know that?—Well, we generally took what was required for the shift.

50. But you really took in more and left it, so that you were breaking the law?—Well, I suppose other men break the law as well as we.

51. *Mr. Dowgray.*] I saw some men in the mine wearing gauzes: are they safeguards?—I do not think they are very safe.

52. Have you seen men using them?—Yes.

53. Do they hinder your sight?—Of course, you cannot see with them as well as you can with the naked eye.

54. So that you consider them a source of danger?—Well, they stop the biggest pieces of coal getting into your eyes—they are a slight protection.

55. You do not use them in pillar-extraction?—No, only when the coal is proud.

56. *Mr. Cochrane.*] You said you would like to see the rope-road clear of all the tubs for starting in the morning: do you think that is a feasible proposition?—I do.

57. Would it not cause great delay?—No, not that I can see.

58. *Mr. Dowgray.*] Do you not come into contact with wire when walking down there?—Yes, sometimes.

59. There is danger in carrying your picks?—Yes.

ROBERT NICHOLAS RIDD sworn and examined. (No. 26.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—Secretary of the Coal-miners' Union.

2. What is the strength of your union?—We have a total strength approximating something like five hundred members in Otago and Southland.

3. And how many in Kaitangata?—I could not tell you exactly, but somewhere between two hundred and ten and two hundred and fifty.

4. And what proportion of the miners in Kaitangata does that represent?—The great majority of them are members of the union.

5. Do you speak on behalf of your union or from your own personal experience?—To a certain extent from both.

6. What mining experience have you had?—As a miner, about seven or eight years.

7. In Kaitangata?—No, in other districts.

8. Do your duties take you into the mines?—Yes, fairly often.

9. In what way?—I occupy the position of workmen's inspector, and nearly every quarter I am appointed as one of the scrutineers to draw the quarterly cavil.

10. As workmen's inspector, what do you do?—Well, there are generally two workmen's inspectors, and their duties are occasionally to go down and examine the mine.

11. What is your personal experience of that mine?—I am of opinion that under the existing state of affairs the workmen's inspector is only a farce.

12. When you have examined the mine what have you found?—We usually make out a report, and forward a copy of the report to the mine-manager.

13. How often do you make these inspections?—At no stated periods.

14. When did you make the last one?—The last inspection was made on the occasion of the accident to the late Joseph Carson.

15. Prior to that when did you inspect?—I cannot give you the exact date, but the one before that was made when the late John McGhee met his death.

16. How often do you make these inspections?—Well, it is the usual thing to make an inspection if there are any complaints from the miners. There are no stated periods for the inspections. We find that under the Act the workmen's inspectors can only claim admission to a mine once a month, and if he goes down to-day and finds it in passable order there may be a pressing necessity for him to go down again inside a month. So we do not go down regularly, in case there may be a complaint from the men as to the conditions not being good.

17. Do you think it would be an improvement from a safety point of view if, in addition to the right to inspect once a month, the workmen's inspector had the right to go down in case of accident?—We have that right already in cases of fatal accident.

18. Have you any suggestion to make on the subject?—I should say that the workmen's inspector should have practically the same right as the Inspector of Mines to go down at any time. And, further than that, they should have increased powers. All that they can do at present is to go down and inspect the mine and make a report, a copy of which is sent to the mine-manager. If the matter is serious a copy is sent to the Inspector of Mines, but that is the last of it. I should imagine that if the inspection proves that the mine is dangerous the workmen's inspector should have the right to say work in the place should be stopped until the Government Inspector can visit it.

19. What experience ought a workmen's inspector to have in order to have the right to interfere?—He should have a certain amount of practical experience; he should be a miner.

20. How would you suggest that his experience and ability should be tested?—Well, it is rather a difficult matter. I have not considered it from that point of view.