

44. *Mr. Dowgray.*] They use the first convenient place they can find?—Yes. I think it would be a simple matter to have small places dug out and filled in afterwards. Of course, all the men would have to be educated up to using those places.

45. How far would the men have to travel to get into the main return?—I cannot say. I have not worked there during the last ten or twelve months.

46. Are there not men working close to the shaft?—Yes.

47. So that you could hardly go into the return airway without vitiating the air?—No, it would be impossible.

48. It passes from one section to the other?—Yes.

49. *Mr. Cochrane.*] As to the deputies having more responsibility, what duties would you add to those already specified in the Special Rules?—If the Special Rules were thoroughly carried out by conscientious men it would meet the case.

50. Then, you say the men consider the furnace unsatisfactory: is that in regard to possible ignitions of gas, or in regard to the amount of air which circulates?—I think the main thing is the possible ignition of gas. If the furnace was going well there is a large amount of air travelling at Castle Hill, but the practice is to let the fires go down at night and the men find the places dull.

51. Where there is a fan used is it kept going at night?—Yes, there are shifts working all the time.

52. *Mr. Reed.*] In reply to Mr. Dowgray you said that the men used the first convenient place they could find for the deposition of excreta, to the disadvantage of one another: is that not the men's own fault?—Yes, to a great extent; but wherever they might go the same thing obtains. They could hardly find a place in the mine where other men would not be affected.

53. Cannot you get into the return airways?—There are no return airways.

54. But I went through one in the Castle Hill Mine?—That might be.

55. Cannot you use dust as a deodorant?—Yes, but the men will not use it.

56. But is that not their own fault?—Possibly so; but I think it would be better to have small latrines.

57. It appears that the men's complaint is against one another?—Undoubtedly; it is against every one concerned.

NEIL MCKENZIE sworn and examined. (No. 28.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A miner.

2. With how many years' experience?—About ten years and a half.

3. In Kaitangata?—Five years in Kaitangata.

4. Prior to that?—At Shag Point, and Lovell's Flat, and Mount Somers.

5. Do you hold any position in the mine?—No.

6. Or under the union?—No, not at the present time.

7. You are not a workmen's inspector?—No, but I have been.

8. What matters do you wish to bring before this Commission?—Well, the general working of the Kaitangata Mine.

9. In what respect?—Pillar- and head-coal working and ventilation.

10. You heard the last witness?—Yes.

11. Do you agree with him?—Yes, in regard to the matter of pillar- and head-coal working.

12. Have you anything to add to what he said in regard to that matter?—No, I could not very well add anything to his remarks. He said he would like to see up to 6 ft. of coal left on the stone roof. I say it depends on the quality of the coal left, because there are some places where we are working where the coal is very rotten and full of what we call "sooty backs." I do not think that 6 ft. of coal would hold them.

13. What do you suggest?—Of course, you could hardly make provision for them. My opinion is that the head coal should be worked to a certain height and no higher—to a height where the men could look after the roof. Under the present system of work we have a place up to 30 ft. When the deputy comes in with a flashlight you can see it. He comes in perhaps on one day, and not perhaps again for a week. You are provided with a long stick to sound the roof, but we cannot sound it at that height.

14. There are no means of seeing it?—No, except with an electric torch which can be flashed on the roof.

15. Have you any further suggestions on that point?—I think that if bords were driven narrower it would be better. They should drive their bords about 6 ft. or 8 ft. wide, and timber them thoroughly so as to make provision for taking out the pillar and head coal afterwards. They could get most of the coal with very little danger to the men, and without going so high as they do. I think if the company were satisfied to get a fair quantity of coal with safety to the men, and not require them to run so many risks, things would be a great deal better for both sides.

16. Is there any other matter you wish to bring before the Commission?—In regard to ventilation I agree with the previous witness, and have said that stentons should be driven more regularly than they are at present, and that the management should not rely so much on carrying the air in by brattices and letting the air come in on its own. The men would then get more air. Last quarter I was working in a place where the Commission went through yesterday. Instead of driving stentons to thoroughly ventilate it the management carried the air in with brattices, with the result that we did not get the benefit of the air, though certainly the air itself was not bad. Towards the end of the quarter it carried a little gas. We would have been working in good air if they had driven stentons and done away with the brattice.