

34. Do you think that once a month is ample for inspections?—No; I know there are plenty of mines where that is not sufficient, but for this mine it is quite enough.

35. Now, on the four inspections you have made, how did you find things?—We might have found slight discrepancies, such as timbering, but on the whole it has been very fair.

JAMES CUMMING sworn and examined. (No. 46A.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A miner, and president of the miners' union.

2. What is the strength of your union?—Well, it fluctuates a little, but we have on the books about ninety-four or ninety-six.

3. What matters do you wish to bring before the Commission?—In the main I corroborate the evidence given by the check inspectors.

4. You are working in the mine now?—Yes.

5. What experience have you had in mining?—Probably twenty years.

6. Where—all in this district?—No, in Victoria, Tasmania, and in the Millerton, Blackball, State, and Old Cardiff Mines.

7. Have you anything to add to the evidence of the previous witnesses?—Not as far as ventilation is concerned. I would like, however, to touch upon the subject of pillar-working and the wage system. I would like to contradict the statement of Mr. Reed that the average earnings of the miners here is 17s. per day. The figure quoted by him from the mine-manager's report is the gross earnings of the men. There is nothing deducted from that for ammunition, explosives, oil, tools, and so on, and it is incorrect to say that their average earnings are 17s. a day. I take exception to that quotation from the mine-manager's report.

8. You say that 17s. does not take into account the offtakes?—No, for explosives, tools, and other incidental expenses.

9. What would they have clear after those deductions were made?—It would bring it down considerably. I cannot say what it would amount to for each pair of men. Some men would use more explosives than others. From the different sources it would probably be reduced by 1s. 3d. or 1s. 6d. per day.

10. Even that would be better than 12s. day wages?—That would be very foolish for me to say.

11. Of course, it is an element for us to consider in making a recommendation on the subject. If it appears to the Commission to be advisable to recommend the abolition of the competitive system, then we would have to consider the matter both from the point of wage earnings and the output of the mine?—Yes. But the output of the mine has nothing to do with us; we have to look after our own safety.

12. But perhaps it would be crippling the industry?—We have ourselves to consider, and human safety is the first thing to be taken into account.

13. You cannot give us any idea as to how either the wage earnings or the mine-output would be affected by the change?—No, I am not prepared to go into that. I would like to reply to a question put by Mr. Reed to one of our witnesses with regard to the safety of the pillars, and the fact that there have been no accidents. The manager here has a privilege which the manager of no other mine has—that is, to pick his men for these places. He can pick his men and see that they are all competent to go into the pillars, and only those men go into the cavilling ballot. There are only certain men who go into the ballot for those dangerous places. I only wish to say that as a reason why there has been no accidents in this mine. I would like also to reply to another question as to the men having qualifications. We have in our agreement a provision whereby if we do not know any man he can be looked after. He may be a quartz-miner, but not a coal-miner. I think any manager can tell at a glance, on seeing a man working, whether he is a practical miner or not.

14. Well, it could be arranged this way: either that he should have to produce testimonials of service or to satisfy some one that he is competent?—Well, that is just the same as a miner bringing a clearance to the union. He could bring the same recommendation on his union clearance.

15. But, supposing he came out from Home without anything in writing, he might simply go into the mine and show that he understands his business?—Yes, that is quite right. I would also just like to elaborate as to baths; I think they should be brought into force. With the other witnesses, I advocate that there should be a bath for every person. I consider that if anybody is entitled to a bath it is the working-man. The cost is not a matter for us—it is for the cleanliness of the men. You will find that miners' homes are generally small, and there are children about, and his mining clothes should be washed somewhere else. We could do quite well without that in our homes. I am out against the present system, and would like to see this new idea put into force. Then, in regard to the wage matter, when a man goes into a mine he has a perfect right to know what he is going to get.

16. *Mr. Dowgray.*] In connection with the abolition of piecework, or the contract system, the men have discussed this?—Yes.

17. And they know that your agreement is for 12s. a day?—Yes.

18. And they would prefer 12s. a day for the matter of safety?—Yes, provided there is work for them.

19. *Mr. Parry.*] Do you think the workmen's inspectors should be allowed to go into the mine at any time?—Yes.

20. What is your opinion with regard to the extension of the powers of workmen's inspectors?—I consider that if the check inspectors thought it was necessary for them to inspect the mine, and they found something which after their report was not rectified, they should have the power to sue the management for it. As one of the witnesses has stated, they have only made four inspections here during the last two years, but you never know when anything is going to crop up, and I think they should have the power to inspect the mine whenever they think fit.