

18. Do you not think that if he is qualified he should be able to pass the deputies' examination? He ought to be able to.

19. Then do you not think he should do so?—No. You will understand that the management going round every day know when a man is a practical man.

20. But they have nothing to do with the appointment of the check inspectors?—Certainly not; but the union always appoints the most practical men. They do not appoint a man who has just arrived in the country.

21. *Mr. Dowgray.*] As to the length of time a man should serve before he takes charge of a working-place?—I consider that a man should have two years inside a coal-mine, and not less than six months with a practical miner, before he takes charge of a place himself.

22. You have read the duties and powers of firemen under the Coal-mines Act?—Yes.

23. What you ask is simply that the law should be carried out?—Yes.

24. You heard what the previous witness said about anchor-chains: would they prove a safeguard on a face-jig?—Yes. I consider that for the safety of all concerned, in a mine where there are so many outlets, there should be gates with locks and keys to prevent men wandering in them. Take the previous fire in this mine as an instance: it is said to have been caused by drunken men passing through the mine.

25. You recommend that no man should be allowed to travel the mine except on his ordinary duties?—Yes; when a fireman closes the mine by turning the board no man should be allowed to go in.

26. Is your recommendation as to air-splits intended to prevent the vitiated air from one section of the mine going into another?—No; each section should be ventilated on its own, but not that one fan should be required for each place.

27. *Mr. Reed.*] Do you approve of deputies holding certificates?—Yes.

28. Why?—Because I believe in the most experienced men holding firemen's tickets—men that have been used to gas.

29. Consequently you would require a certificate that he is competent?—Yes.

30. Why then should not a man who is to have the power to shut the mine also give some proof of his qualifications?—You do not understand me. I do not want any man to close down the mine, but the check inspector should have the power to say that a section should be closed down until the Inspector of Mines arrives.

31. Should the check inspector be given that authority without any proof that he is competent?—Well, if he had two years' experience and is a practical man.

32. At the Kaitangata Mine the check inspector told us that he had no experience at pillar-work: in such cases as that do you not see the great advantage of a certificate?—It is not always the most practical man who holds a mine-manager's or any other sort of certificate.

33. Is it not some proof?—It is a little proof.

34. Why should we dispense with that in the case of a check inspector to whom you want to give such powers?—I say that it is no proof that he is not as qualified as if he held a certificate.

35. *The Chairman.*] Do you consider that a check inspector ought to be as well qualified to examine the conditions of a mine as a deputy?—Certainly.

36. You admit that the deputy ought to have a certificate?—Yes.

37. If one should have that qualification, then why not the other?—I consider that a man who has not a ticket is sometimes more practical than a man who has one. I know a man who sat five times for a mine-manager's certificate and did not get it, and yet he is a practical man.

38. It seems to me that if you are asking for extended powers it would only be reasonable to satisfy, say, the Inspector of Mines or the Inspecting Engineer that you are qualified to exercise those powers with the same degree of knowledge?—Well, I consider that a man who has put the time in in a coal-mine has that degree of knowledge although not having a ticket.

39. You consider that a check inspector is quite capable of discharging the duties of a deputy without having a deputy's ticket?—No.

40. *Mr. Dowgray.*] In the event of an accident taking place—take, for instance, the case of a man getting his leg broken at the Millerton Mine—the check inspectors are called in to visit the place, and if they express themselves dissatisfied with the conditions, what takes place?—There is nothing further done.

41. Does it remain standing until the Inspector comes?—In the case of a fatal accident it has to stand; but, if they are not satisfied, they want the power to stop the place in other cases than fatal accidents.

42. In the event of a fatal accident taking place, whose report is taken?—The check inspector's.

FRANCIS ALBERT SMITH sworn and examined. (No. 43.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—An engine-driver.

2. With what qualifications?—A first-class certificate.

3. How long have you held it?—Ten years.

4. What mine do you work in?—The Westport Coal Company's Millerton Mine.

5. How long have you been there?—Nine years.

6. What matters do you wish to bring before the Commission?—Well, that where large plants are working one man should not be left in charge by himself.

7. Why?—Because it is not safe to be in charge of it, and the responsibility is too great on one man's nervous system. The strain is too great for him to be always by himself.

8. To what kind of plant does that apply—to shafts or an incline?—Where there is a large plant similar to what we have here. There are four large boilers, two compressors, and four fans.