

16. And not less than one bath to four men—that is, plunge-baths?—I contended for extra-large basins. They would not require the same number of plunge-baths as they would hand-basins.

17. What proportion of the men, do you think, would use the baths?—That is difficult to say. Not more than 50 per cent. would use the plunge-baths, but a much higher percentage would use the showers and basins.

18. How would you determine whether the baths should be erected or not?—You could take a ballot on the matter.

19. And on what proportion of men willing to use the baths would it be reasonable to ask the management to install them—50 or 75 per cent., do you think?—I consider that the baths should be made compulsory, and every man should be made to wash in them if they were installed. It would be absolutely useless to have the baths erected if the men do not use them.

20. But how are you going to compel the men to use them?—I do not think there would be any difficulty in the matter—in fact, the percentage who would refuse to use them would be infinitesimal. Miners, on the whole, are not an uncleanly lot of men, although they are looked upon as such.

21. Do you think it would be fair, after the baths are installed, to make a charge for their upkeep?—No.

22. In this particular mine, what facilities would be available for laying on water?—Good facilities.

23. Is the water handy?—Yes. The next subject I wish to refer to is the prevention of accidents. As has been said by the secretary to the Accident Fund, this mine has gained a notoriety as regards fatal and other accidents. I think the statement which he placed before you shows that there have been over two hundred accidents in two years, while the men employed number four hundred. A very large number of accidents have occurred during the six or seven years during which the mine has been working, and we have suggestions to make which we think will prevent them. There is no doubt that a great many accidents happen in connection with the extraction of pillars, and we consider that more chocks should be used; also, that not more than one pair of men should be engaged extracting a pillar. At the present time there are two and three pairs of men at work on one pillar, and we consider that practice dangerous. If many men are working at a pillar which is 16 or 25 yards wide, the men cannot be at sufficient distance from one another to hear when the ground is moving.

24. What size are the pillars?—All sizes. The bords have been driven any way—in fact, there have been cases where bords have been driven into one another. That shows that the management has not had any knowledge of the quantity of coal between the bords. I think that is the result of bords not being driven by sights. We contend that all bords should be driven not more than 9 ft. or 12 ft. wide, and that the pillars should be left bigger or smaller than they are at the present time. The majority of the pillars will perhaps be 10 or 12 yards. If the pillars were left a little larger a greater percentage of coal could be won easier.

25. Cannot the miners themselves stop the robbing?—But it is not altogether their fault that these bords have been driven so wide. The rule laid down by the management is that a bord shall be broken away 12 ft. wide for the first 3 yards, and then opened out to 18 ft. wide. The management can bring that down to 16 ft. wide. The coal is of a friable nature, and when it falls there is a great temptation to the miner to fill it. The average height is from 10 ft. to 14 ft., and we contend that if the bords were driven about 8 ft. high, and from 9 ft. to 12 ft. wide, the air would not have the same action upon the coal as it has at present, causing it to frit away. We also contend that when a pillar is being taken out chocks should be set, even if the old bord is good; new timber should be put in, and chocks set all along.

26. What do you call an "old bord": how long should it have been driven?—I think any bord six months old should be retimbered.

27. You agree with the last witness as to the class of timber—that it ought to be heavier and of better quality?—Yes.

28. And as to the sort of wood?—Yes. It should be pine and birch, I think. The timber used does not appear to be of the best quality; it is too full of sap.

29. If you got a good large tree—I do not mean just a sapling—which you could split into a number of props, would not that make good props, as long as you did not split them too small?—It would be all right for props, but not for bars.

30. You prefer the round bar?—The miners find it much easier to get the round bar or cap to sit after it has been bevelled at the ends. Then, we contend that the timbering in all these places should be done in a systematic manner. We think the props should be not more than 4 ft. apart. You will see by the list that a great number of accidents have resulted from falls of stone, and yet in those places the roof has been considered safe. We consider that timbering should be done whether the roof is considered safe or not.

31. Who does the timbering, the miners?—Yes.

32. Who supervises the timbering?—The deputy.

33. The man in charge of the pillar or face does the timbering himself?—Yes.

34. What have you to say as to the experience necessary for a man to become competent to do timbering?—I think, if a man is required to have two years' experience prior to having charge of a coal-face, he should have two years' experience in setting timber.

35. But he might have worked in a mine which was fairly safe?—Still, if systematic timbering is insisted on he would have done some timbering, no matter whether the mine was considered safe or unsafe. Then, we consider another cause of accidents is the use of chain jigs. This is not the first time we have spoken against the use of chain jigs. We consider it is an obsolete custom, not only by reason of its causing accidents directly, but also as the indirect cause of them. If you will look down the list of accidents you will see that a fatal accident occurred in October, 1909, when one man was killed and four others injured. That accident occurred at a place where two