

20. *Mr. Dowgray.*] Have you any idea of the number of minor accidents that occur in this colliery?—I could not tell you offhand, but the Mines Department has the reports on them. If you compare the accidents now with those of fourteen or fifteen years ago, you will find there are a great many more nowadays. I am judging from the payments out of the medical fund. It used to be £4 or £5 a fortnight, and now it goes up to £40 or £50 a fortnight.

21. *The Chairman.*] You are taking the accidents which put the men on the books of the benefit society?—Yes.

22. *Mr. Dowgray.*] How does the number of men employed compare?—It is about the same.

23. To what do you attribute the increase in accidents?—The men had more experience then.

24. You think it is the unskilled labour which is the cause?—It is partly the cause, though our fatal accidents happen mostly to skilled men. That is the result of the rush in the work.

25. Is it customary for the miners to endeavour to make a certain amount each day?—Yes, they have to make a living, and with the pillars it has to be a bit dangerous before they can make anything out of it.

26. So that under the present system the hard safe working does not pay?—No.

27. *Mr. Fletcher.*] Were you working here when the Compensation Act was passed?—Yes.

28. Have you any idea how much money was paid out for accidents prior to that?—No, I could not say. Of course, it was a great deal less than it is now. We do not attribute the accidents to the Compensation Act.

29. Do you know how much was paid out of the Accident Fund then?—No, but it was smaller fourteen or fifteen years ago. I could not give you the exact figures.

30. At Millerton it was about £40 a year ten years ago, and as soon as the Compensation Act came into force it rose to £40 a month?—Do you think they get hurt on purpose?

31. *Mr. Parry.*] Do you think the conditions have improved this last six months?—No, they are about the same. They have improved this last week or two, though.

32. *Mr. Dowgray.*] Then the Commission has accomplished something?—Yes.

ROBERT LEONARD KNIGHT sworn and examined. (No. 50.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A miner, and check inspector for the Cascade Mine.

2. How many years' experience have you had as a miner?—Fifteen.

3. Where did you gain your experience?—In Western Australia, Victoria, and New Zealand.

4. Upon what matters do you wish to speak?—The whole of the matters covered by the Commission.

5. You have heard the evidence of the previous witnesses: have you anything to add to it?—No; I corroborate everything that has been brought forward. I would like to say a word or two in regard to the general safety of the men. No bords should be broken away more than 12 ft. wide. I say that no pillar should be split more than 12 ft. wide and 8 ft. high; you could contend with the roof then. I would also recommend a single shift throughout the mine, except in headings. I do not wish to interfere with the development of the mine at all, but every other place should be worked with one shift.

6. *Mr. Dowgray.*] Do you think the double shift on pillars is a source of danger?—Yes.

7. Would you explain to the Commission your reasons for saying so?—In double shifts in pillars, when a man leaves his pillar in the afternoon it might be all working, and if another man has to follow him in the same pillar he is running his head into danger; but if a pillar is left it will quieten down. And then, if it is worked on a single shift, the man would know how he set his timber.

8. What is the system of breaking away bords just now?—Some of them are broken away 12 ft. wide and then widened out, and some are broken away 18 ft. wide. According to the agreement the management can decide that.

9. It is not customary to break them away 12 ft.?—No.

10. You suggest that it should be made compulsory?—Yes.

11. How does the system of work here compare with that in Western Australia?—I cannot say. I did not work in coal-mines in Western Australia.

12. *Mr. Parry.*] What is your opinion of men who depend upon the amount of material got being allowed to use or handle dynamite?—I am of opinion that if a man has to depend upon the tonnage he ought to be allowed to use the dynamite himself. He has had enough experience, and ought to be allowed to fire the shots.

13. Do you think it would tend to minimize accidents if the handling and using of dynamite were confined to one man alone?—No.

14. Have you had any experience of mining in any other parts of the country?—Yes.

15. You have worked in Western Australia in the gold-mines?—Yes, and in Victoria. I have fired thirty holes myself in one round.

16. With fuse?—Yes.

17. How did you spit them?—With a piece of dynamite, with fuse of different lengths.

18. And you fired thirty holes with safety?—Yes.

19. What do you think is a fair number of holes to fire with safety?—For absolute safety I would not go above six.

20. What is your opinion of a man having a certain amount of experience before taking charge of a face?—He should have two years' experience.

21. You think that is essential to minimize accidents?—Yes.

22. What is your opinion as to the experience a man should have before being allowed to handle dynamite?—You do not want much experience for that. A man very soon gets into the use of it.

23. *Mr. Reed.*] As regards experience, did you come straight from Western Australia here?—No, from Victoria.