

1323. You would be prepared for your certificate to be dealt with by a Warden (a non-professional man in mining matters), a miner, and a mine-manager, the miner having no diploma or certificate of any kind?—Why do you assume that a miner has no credentials?

1324. But this Bill presumes that he is only an experienced miner?—But the Warden would take into account the miner's experience. I am perfectly satisfied with the tribunal provided by this Bill.

1325. And you would be satisfied to have your certificate cancelled in that way?—Yes, I would be perfectly satisfied that I would get fair-play.

1326. I want to direct your attention to clause 7, subsection (j), page 9, in the new Bill. Subclause (b), which allows the check inspectors to make an inspection once at least in every fortnight. The English Act allows such an inspection to be made once a month. Do you not think that is sufficient?—I would let them make it as often as they liked. I think they do good rather than harm. They relieve the Mines Department and the management of responsibility.

1327. That is looking at it from the point of view of the Mines Department?—In the interests of human life.

1328. In the interests of the Mines Department?—That is one side of the question also.

1329. I want you to consider the side of the colliery-owner: do you not think once a month is enough to have these inspections made?—If I were a manager I would like them to come round every day, so long as they caused no hinderance. The present Act states once a month, and the English Act states once a month. The Royal Commission here considered it more suitable to have these inspections made once a fortnight if necessary, and as a member of that Royal Commission I support the proposal.

1330. They are required to make their report within twenty-four hours from making their inspection. The English Act says they shall make their report forthwith. Do you not think that is better?—There is no reason why they should not make their report before they leave the mine?—Exactly, and I think that should be done.

1331. Will you please refer to page 5 of the Bill, section 7, clause 1 (d): "The total number of men ordinarily employed in any ventilating district shall not, without the consent in writing of the Inspector, exceed fifty at any one time, and in no case shall the number exceed seventy." I understand that the British Act gives the maximum as seventy-five?—I approve of seventy.

1332. Seventy as a minimum or seventy as a maximum?—Maximum.

1333. Do you not think that fifty is very low—for which the Inspector's consent is necessary?—It will not be very often required, and the Inspectors are reasonable men.

1334. I understand there are likely to be difficulties—supposing the Inspector is away. Is there any harm in raising the limit slightly?—Personally, I think seventy is reasonable. I do not think it is a very serious matter, and I believe that you would not find the Inspector unreasonable.

1335. But he might be absent, and it might result in hampering the working of the mine. Why should not the English Act be followed?—It is a very small matter.

1336. Now, Mr. Reed, will you look at section 9 of the Bill, which authorizes the making of additional rules?—The present Act also provides for additional rules.

1337. This Bill makes provision for a committee to make additional rules for any mine. That committee is to consist of the mine-manager, a representative of the workmen, and the Inspector. Do you not think that that is an improper position to place the Inspector in?—I think that section is satisfactory; it was a recommendation of the Royal Commission.

1338. You approve of the Inspector being on that committee?—Yes, he occupies an impartial position.

1339. If the Inspector is to be the suggestor of special rules, and if he has some special rule which he wishes to introduce into any mine, then he is not an impartial person on that committee. He cannot be impartial, because he is setting forward a special rule for adoption?—He is impartial because he is neither interested as a capitalist nor as a workman. That is what I mean by impartial.

1340. But those rules of his may or may not be impartial?—Is there any appeal? I think that Board is properly constituted.

1341. Yes, the Minister has the right of veto in regard to those rules?—There is no appeal to another Court.

1342. Would not an experienced Warden be a more suitable person than the Inspector to be on that committee?—Not in that capacity. It is a technical committee as regards mining, where judicial knowledge is not so important.

1343. But as to the determination of whether a man should lose his certificate or not?—We are referring now to additional special rules.

1344. But the trial may depend upon technical evidence?—But this is to determine working-conditions. I think the committee is excellent.

1345. I want to show you that if an Inspector is endeavouring to get certain special rules introduced into a mine, he is not an impartial person on that committee, because he goes there with his mind made up that those certain rules should be introduced?—No, he puts them on the table for discussion. I often bring up matters before my colleagues on a Board, to hear what they have to say. I do not think he ceases to be impartial because he tables certain suggested rules.

1346. Will you admit that there may be circumstances in which he is not an impartial judge?—Quite possibly.

1347. Would it not be better to appoint a Warden instead of an Inspector?—No.

1348. You take the risk of having your Inspector acting in an impartial manner?—There is a very remote risk.

1349. You are prepared to take that risk?—Yes, that very remote risk.