

for a colliery disaster are all present. Section 62 provides for a report of any accident attended with serious injury to any person. Under the conditions by which I became aware of the above facts, I cannot recommend further action being taken, although the payment to the sufferer, William Willcox, on account of his injuries, is evidence of an independent nature. In view of any subsequent explosions, perhaps you may consider it advisable to place on record our knowledge of these past events.—FRANK REED, Inspecting Engineer, Mines Department." That is your letter of the 28th January?—Yes.

34. Did you receive any reply from the Under-Secretary to that?—No.

34A. What was your next communication, Mr. Reed?—At the beginning of the present session of Parliament Mr. Blow sent me a proof of a Bill to amend the Coal-mines Act for my revision and suggestion. After I had revised it I reported to him.

35. Is this your letter dated 27th June, 1914, headed "Firedamp and Fine Coaldust reported at Taupiri Coal-mines": "The Under-Secretary of Mines.—The Inspector for Mines, Mr. Bennie, in his monthly report hereunder for May reports that firedamp and fine coaldust exist at the Taupiri coal-mines. These are the conditions which occasion colliery disasters. Ignitions of gas causing men to be burned have been reported from these mines lately. The Royal Commission on Mines, 1911, recommended amendments and additions to our Coal-mines Act to provide for better ventilation, laying coal-dust safety explosives, safety-lamp regulations, &c. Our Act is generally obsolete, being based on a British Act long since repealed. If a disaster occurs as the result of an inadequate law the Inspection Branch of the Department cannot be held responsible. The Brunner and Kaitangata disasters cost a hundred lives. It is the unexpected that happens.—FRANK REED, Inspecting Engineer, Mines Department"?—Yes, that is my letter.

36. What was your next communication?—I wrote to the Under-Secretary asking him to have preference given to the Coal-mines Bill if only one Bill was to be passed. The Mining and Coal-mines Bills had both been prepared. I asked him to give preference to the Coal-mines Amendment Bill if only one Bill was to be passed, as I feared a holocaust in these mines.

37. You stated that?—I did.

38. Have you a copy of that letter?—Not the one in which I used the word "holocaust," although I have used it several times in connection with this mine.

39. This is your letter, dated 29th July, 1914. It is headed "Explosions of Gas at the Taupiri Collieries": "The Under-Secretary for Mines.—I would be obliged if you would ask Inspector Bennie why in view of the four gas-explosions by which persons were burnt at the Taupiri Company's collieries at Huntly, which he reported to the Inspecting Engineer in January, he did not then insist, in accordance with Special Rule 14 under the Coal-mines Act, 'that the manager shall direct the underviewer to see that locked safety-lamps are used and naked lights excluded wheresoever and whensoever danger from firedamp is apprehended.' The ignition of firedamp recorded hereunder, by which a collier (Kelly) was burned was caused by a naked light carried by Kelly in Ralph's Taupiri Mine; it might have been a holocaust. The seriousness of these frequent explosions at Huntly cannot be lightly passed over. The responsibility of our Department is enormous. Should another Kaitangata or Brunner disaster occur the public would justly condemn us. Inspector Bennie and Mr. Fletcher, mine-manager, should be made to realize the responsibility of the situation. Only approved safety-lamps and permitted flameless explosives should be allowed at the Taupiri coal-mines, such mines being adjacent underground. The recommendations of the Royal Commission on Mines, 1911, if given effect to in the Coal-mines Bill, will immensely strengthen the hands of the Mines Inspection staff to secure conditions of greater safety. The existing Act is obsolete.—FRANK REED, Inspecting Engineer, Mines Department." That letter was written by you, Mr. Reed, on the 29th July?—Yes, on the 29th July.

40. Later on, were you still uneasy?—Yes, I was very anxious.

41. When did you next write on the subject?—I think the next letter is dated the 13th August, and then another a little later.

42. Then, from the file it appears that, in accordance with your request, Mr. Reed, the Under-Secretary wrote to the Inspector of Mines asking for a report. Mr. Blow's letter is dated the 4th August, 1914, and is as follows: "Gas-explosions at the Taupiri Collieries.—The Inspector of Mines, Thames.—With regard to the ignition of firedamp on the 9th July at Ralph's Mine, by which William Kelly was burned, as reported by you on the 24th July, will you please inform me, at your earliest convenience, whether, considering that other accidents of a similar description have recently occurred at the Taupiri collieries, locked safety-lamps should not in future be used and naked lights excluded at Ralph's Mine, in accordance with Special Rule 14. Also please inform me if you recommend a prosecution of the manager for the aforesaid negligence, by which a disastrous explosion might have been caused. The sinking of a new air-shaft, the proposed installation of a new fan, and the air-measurements, as reported by you, have no bearing upon the past ignitions of gas and burning of several miners.—H. J. H. Blow, Under-Secretary"?—Yes, that is correct.

43. Then, in reply to that letter, the Inspector of Mines reported as follows, on the 7th August, 1914, to the Under-Secretary: "In reply to your memo. of the 4th instant, I beg to state that after careful consideration I am of the opinion that to prosecute Mr. Fletcher, the mine-manager, for a breach of Special Rule 14 in the case of William Kelly, burnt by an ignition of gas in the company's mine on the 9th July last, I may fail to get a conviction, but the moral effect of such a prosecution will be to produce more effective supervision, the value of which we cannot foresee. In view of the alleged previous burnings by gas in the mines, apart from that of the 4th instant, which may be necessary to prosecute, I, as Inspector of Mines, received no help from the Miners' Union or their check inspectors, who are, as at present constituted, the creation of the mining company's directors. I have had no complaints from the union officials or any one of its members, either written or verbal, for over twelve months past. I may say that there is very little carburetted-hydrogen gas found in the mine, but for some time past small quantities have been found and reported by the examining officers of the company. In view of that I have repeatedly requested that the roads in the mine where dry coaldust has accumulated should be adequately watered, and all shots fired in the mine to be fired by the fireman and deputy as required by Special Rule 25 (d). The manager has not complied as fully as I would like. The foot-tracks of the travelling-roads only have been watered, and while the manager has informed me in writing that shots are being fired by officials, I am not quite sure that this is so. I cannot