

71. Does it contain the recommendation of the Commission with regard to safety-lamps?—Yes, it does—it is practically verbatim from the Commission's report.

72. Which is the clause in the Bill of 1912 which contains the provision for enforcing the use of safety-lamps?—Clause 46 (a), I think it is. On pages 7, 8, and 9 of that Bill of 1912 appear the recommendations of our New Zealand Royal Commission as regards safety-lamps, in statute form.

73. Then, I can put it this way: that the Commission having sat and made recommendations among which was one regarding the use of safety-lamps, a Bill was drawn embodying these recommendations and introduced into Parliament?—I do not know if it was introduced into Parliament.

74. Do you know whether it went before the Goldfields and Mines Committee?—I do not know.

75. Your copy says, "As reported from the Goldfields and Mines Committee, House of Representatives, 17th October, 1912"?—Yes.

76. That is two years ago, nearly?—Yes, two years this month.

77. After that Bill was reported from the Committee, did a deputation come to Wellington on the matter?—Yes.

78. I got it out of Mr. Fletcher in the witness-box that he went down to Wellington as a member of a deputation to oppose the Bill?—Yes.

79. Did you know of that deputation?—Yes, sir, I was asked to attend it by the Under-Secretary.

80. And did you attend it?—Yes.

81. Did the deputation oppose or support that Bill?—They opposed it clause by clause, but the Minister supported me by contending for the Bill.

82. That is to say that the Minister of Mines, notwithstanding the opposition of this deputation, stood by you, and said the Bill would go on?—Yes, he told them straight that it would go on.

83. Were Mr. Dowgray and Mr. Brown on that deputation?—One of them was.

84. Which one?—Mr. Brown.

85. Did the Bill go on?—No, it has not become law yet, but it is going to.

86. Now, be serious. If that Bill had been passed two years ago and safety-lamps in such mines as this had been the law of the country, could this accident have happened?—I decline to answer that question.

87. But the want of a safety-lamp caused this explosion?—Certainly, it was a naked light which caused the explosion.

88. Now, let me pass on to another point. I want to ask you this: is there not a large area of old workings in the Taupiri Mine which unless adequately ventilated would accumulate large quantities of gas?—There is an immense area. I have scaled off on the mine-plan 250 acres in Ralph's Mine and another 250 in the Extended Mine. It is open pillar work and it is unique. They dare not take these pillars down. It means the maintenance of perhaps a hundred miles of bords and stentons, and that requires an enormous amount of ventilation to carry away the gas given off.

89. Do you agree, Mr. Reed, with the statement made by Mr. Bishop yesterday that this mine is unquestionably unique?—It is; Mr. Bishop is right.

90. And if that is so, then the rules in regard to ventilation of some mines would not be applicable or may require to be particularly rigorously carried out in a mine like this which has so many difficulties?—Yes, this mine requires special attention. It is a difficult problem. Perhaps Mr. Bishop and men of his capability could deal with it. It requires very special provision in regard to the distribution of the air.

91. When you were talking about the shaft-supports, did you also agree with Mr. Bishop that the shaft-pillars have been robbed and split?—Yes, Mr. Morgan and myself were measuring the air round those places last week, and we observed just what you say—the shaft-pillars had been split and robbed. They had got the easily won coal to the loss in stability of the shaft-pillars.

92. Is that dangerous?—It is. It is only a question of time when the coal frets away and there will be no factor of safety. Then the ground will collapse.

93. Of course there is an outlet to that mine at West Taupiri?—Yes.

94. It would be a dreadful calamity if the Taupiri ventilation went wrong and Ralph's shaft went in?—I do not think it is so dangerous as that. It would not go with a crash, it would give warning. It is not an immediate source of danger, because they have two other outlets to the mine.

95. That is, if the other way is clear?—I do not regard as a great risk to human life the insecurity of the shaft.

96. Now, you have admitted or told me that there is a large area of open workings which, unless adequately ventilated, would collect large quantities of gas. As men have received burns by ignition in better-ventilated working-parts of the mine, is not that proof that gas was being given off in such workings?—Yes, I understand that the men have been burned at places where they were working—that is, where there is an intake current of air. The current of air is concentrated where the men are working. If burns are received where there is a current of air how much more so will the men be burned where there is no air-current—that is, in the old workings?—That is natural to understand.

97. As men have received burns in better ventilated working-places, it is only reasonable to assume that the danger would be more serious as the workings advanced?—Yes.

98. Are the bords very high in places?—Yes, sir. Some of them in Ralph's Mine are higher than I have ever seen elsewhere.

99. That, of course, makes it very difficult to inspect?—Yes, naturally, very difficult to inspect, for danger from falls and for gas.

100. Should not a practical man like Mr. Fletcher know that mines like this are very difficult to inspect?—Of course, as a practical man, he must know that the high places are difficult to inspect.

101. If a man knows that these places are so difficult to inspect, should not so much more care be taken to see that they are properly inspected?—That stands to reason.