

(7.) SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PREVENTION, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, OF SIMILAR ACCIDENTS, AND FOR THE SAFE WORKING OF THIS AND OTHER MINES IN THE FUTURE.

Your Commissioners have arrived at certain conclusions with respect to the prevention of future accidents in mines, but they find that in most instances their intended recommendations have been anticipated by the Coal-mines Amendment Bill now before Parliament. This is particularly so with regard to—(a) Ventilation, (b) safety-lamps, (c) duties of inspectors.

*Ventilation.*

We approve of the provisions of clause 7 of the Bill now before the Goldfields and Mines Committee. In our opinion the observance of these provisions will conduce to the safety of the mines and the comfort of the miners working therein.

[Mr. Brown concurs in this recommendation, except with regard to clause 7, subclause (1), paragraph (a), subparagraph (1D). With respect to this he recommends that Inspectors of Mines should have discretionary power to increase the number of men in an air-split to eighty-five.]

*Safety-lamps.*

We approve of and adopt as our recommendation respecting safety-lamps paragraph (a) of subclause (1) of clause 7 of the Bill now before the Committee.

*Duties of Inspectors.*

We concur in the provisions of clauses 17 and 18 of the Bill as regards the duties of Inspectors and submit these clauses as our recommendations on this matter.

*Coaldust in Mines.*

We deem it imperative that legislation should be passed with the object of preventing, if possible, or mitigating the danger arising from the presence of dust in coal-mines, and to that end we recommend the incorporation in our Coal-mines Act of section 62 of the Coal-mines Act of Great Britain (1911) in its entirety.

*Notice of Accidents.*

The provisions of the Coal-mines Act with respect to the reporting of injuries to workmen are somewhat loose and uncertain, as it is left to the judgment of the mine-manager in every case to decide whether or not the injury is a serious one. In this respect section 80 of the Coal-mines Act, 1911 (Great Britain), is much to be preferred to the corresponding section in our Act, and we beg to recommend its inclusion in the New Zealand statute, in lieu of section 62.

*Shot-firing in Dusty Mines.*

We recommend that the following provisions be incorporated in the Coal-mines Act: In all dry and dusty mines, and in mines where the Inspector of Mines is of opinion that dust of a highly inflammable nature exists in dangerous quantity, and also in mines where safety-lamps are in use, no explosives but those permitted by the Chief Inspector of Mines shall be used, and all shot-firing shall be done by officials specially appointed by the manager.

(8.) AS TO WHETHER THE PROVISIONS OF THE EXISTING LAW ARE SUFFICIENT TO GIVE THE INSPECTOR OF MINES FULL AUTHORITY TO ORDER THE USE OF SAFETY-LAMPS AND OTHER APPLIANCES IF IN HIS OPINION SUCH APPLIANCES ARE NECESSARY.

We are of opinion that the existing law does not give the Inspector of Mines direct authority to order the use of safety-lamps or other appliances. There is no provision in the Act giving in precise terms any such authority. Section 58 might be employed as a last resource by an Inspector as an indirect method of compelling the use of safety-lamps or other necessary appliances, but it was not framed for such purpose, and the use of it is, at best, a clumsy and unsatisfactory expedient.

We recommend the insertion in the Act of a direct and definite section, giving the Inspector power to order the use of safety-lamps and any appliances he deems necessary.