

230. When once it was exposed to the air, whatever the temperature of the mine or otherwise, would it not have a tendency to dry up?—I do not think so. I know, because with the floor of our mine, it does not matter where, your coal is naturally damp. You cannot sit on the floor without putting a board under you. You must sit on the timber or you feel a dampness striking through your clothes.

231. Could that not be accounted for by the clay bottom?—But the bottom alters.

232. *The Chairman.*] Do you take the coal right out down to the fireclay?—We try to, because it is to the advantage of the worker.

233. *Mr. Dowgray.*] You stated that your intake and return air-shafts were all to the rise?—The upcast shaft is to the rise, and all the workings to the downcast in Taupiri West, which is the deeper shaft.

234. Are not the old workings in No. 5 away on the rise?—Yes, they are all coming on the rise.

235. There is just a possibility that gas might be bottled up in places of that kind?—Well, it might be possible in some isolated places that that may occur, but I have never known gas to come off coal in the bords.

236. It is possible for gas to be found under those conditions?—Yes, possible.

237. In reply to one question you mentioned that the examining deputy did inspect without specializing in his report whether the test he made was for gas or heating?—It showed signs of gas and heating.

238. But prior to that I think you told Mr. Wilford that you had the men continuously on it all the time?—That was on the right side: the men were there until it was fixed up.

239. Did the deputy go to that particular place because heating had been reported?—It was because men were working there—fillers.

240. That would be a working-place?—Yes.

241. There would be a vast difference between a place where men were filling coal and one where men were sent casually to lift rails?—There should not be.

242. Do you not think there should be a distinction?—I think, and I have every reason to believe, that the men I had under me were conscientious deputies. You could not have got better men for making examinations.

243. To examine that place every morning would be certainly out of the deputy's run?—Yes, provided there was no work to be done in there; but you must examine once a week all the old workings.

244. In the ordinary course he would simply go his ordinary rounds?—Yes, unless he had been specially told.

245. You stated, I think, in reply to a question, that in view of the legislation that is likely to be passed you did not consider this a mine in which it was necessary to use safety-lamps?—I say that in a separate ventilating district, in a mine where the percentage of inflammable gas is $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. or over, then safety-lamps should be used. Supposing by the additional ventilation we contemplate by our new fan, which is on the road out from England, in anticipation of working some far-off coal, if the quantity of air is doubled in this mine by means of the new fan and we do not get more than $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of inflammable gas, the proposed legislation does not say that we shall put in safety-lamps provided we have this additional ventilation.

246. There is a vast difference between something that is going to occur and something we have at present?—Yes.

247. A question I want to ask you is whether you think it necessary to work that mine with safety-lamps under the present conditions, without the new fan?—I would not be afraid to work it with naked lights.

248. In view of all that has occurred?—There may have been some unfortunate occurrence that happened that morning.

249. In view of the burnings you had had, produced by ignitions of firedamp, and this disaster coming on top of them, would you still say it would be quite safe to work with naked lights?—A man is likely to change under the stress of such a calamity as we have gone through—it upsets all one's calculations; but up to the morning of the disaster I considered this a safe mine.

250. But from the present point would you still work the mine with naked lights?—Well, thinking broadly over it, in view of the fact that the fan just gives adequate ventilation for the present workings, and with the knowledge that there may be pent-up gas in some reservoir, of course, trouble might occur again, unless the whole of those old workings, to which I have been giving special attention during the last three months, were dealt with by hydraulic stowing. Under the present conditions, however, I would let it go with safety-lamps.

251. Have you altered your opinion in connection with the Bill, or would you still oppose it?—I would oppose it in regard to two or three clauses.

252. There is no alteration in it as compared to the previous one?—I thought there was.

253. There are some good clauses in it?—Yes, and some bad ones.

254. Which ones do you object to?—I do not mean in regard to safety-lamps or anything like that.

255. Anything in regard to the ventilation clauses? There is a good deal in it incorporating the findings of the Royal Commission?—I do not think the prescribed quality of the air was based upon the report of the New Zealand Royal Commission. That is one point I seriously object to. The British standard has been laid down by the foremost scientists of the day, and is different to the proposal in the Bill. The clause respecting "Additional rules for a mine" is also open to objection.