

recommend that safety-lamps only be used in these mines for two reasons—(1.) Very little gas is found in the miners' working-places, it has practically always been found in falls of the roof of the old workings, and two officials are specially appointed to examine the old workings—during the week daily inspections are made and a full round of the work is made during the week. (2.) The working-places are 10 ft. to 18 ft. high. The light from a safety-lamp is very poor, and if the mine is to be worked as at present by present methods, there will be a great increase in the number of accidents to miners, and serious accidents, if not fatalities, as the result of defective lighting. The safety-lamps will be damaged, and the end in view defeated. To prosecute for a breach of Special Rule 14 in Kelly's case will at least have the effect of producing stricter supervision. Therefore I now ask permission to summons Mr. Fletcher under Special Rule 14 of the Coal-mines Act, 1908, and also permission to employ a solicitor.—B. BENNIE, Inspector of Mines"—Yes, and then that report was sent to me.

44. Yes, the Under-Secretary minuted it on to you as follows: "The Inspecting Engineer,—I should be glad to have your views upon this matter, particularly upon the proposal to prosecute contained in the last paragraph.—H. J. H. B., 11/8/14"—Yes.

45. In response to that you wrote the following minute to the Under-Secretary: "The Under-Secretary for Mines.—Ignitions of gas by which men have been burnt have occurred frequently of late at the Taupiri collieries. A prosecution would do good even if it failed (owing to our obsolete and weak Coal-mines Act), for it would show the public that the Mines Department were alive to the danger, and it would cause the management of the company to give greater attention to the safety of the mine in future. Should an explosion occur, the fact that we had prosecuted would be appreciated by the public. I recommend that Inspector Bennie consults a reliable solicitor, and if we are considered by him to have a fair chance to secure a conviction, proceedings should be taken, and I will go north to assist the Inspector.—FRANK REED, 11/8/14"—Yes.

46. Then there is a memo as follows: "Hon. Minister of Mines.—Please approve action being taken in accordance with the Inspecting Engineer's recommendations.—H. J. H. BLOW, 15/8/14." And then a minute: "Approved—W. F., 15/8/14." That is the Minister of Mines; you know that?—Yes.

47. Now, what was your next communication on this matter?—Two days after writing that last minute I wrote again on the 13th. The letter is not on the file, however; but I have a draft copy of my letter here. My original letter is probably on the file containing Mr. Bennie's monthly reports.

48. Your letter of 13th August, 1914, is as follows: "Dangerous Conditions at the Taupiri, Waipa, and Hikurangi Collieries.—The Under-Secretary for Mines.—In your report for July by Inspector Bennie hereunder you will see reference to seriously bad conditions at Taupiri Mine, firedamp being plentiful and men having been burnt thereby. At Waipa Mine the Manager ignores the law re explosives and is constructing his drives too wide for safety. At Hikurangi Mine an underground fire is being produced by dangerous mining methods. I recommend the perusal of the Inspector's report by the Minister and yourself. With the present obsolete Coal-mines Act the Inspector's hands are tied. The importance of passing the Coal-mines Bill must be now evident.—FRANK REED, Inspecting Engineer, Mines Department"—Yes.

49. That was a month before the explosion?—The Under-Secretary wrote and asked me to explain where the Coal-mines Act was obsolete and ineffective to deal with the defects reported by Inspector Bennie. I prepared for him a tabulated report, a copy of which you have in your hand.

50. You received a request from Mr. Blow to give particulars regarding the dangerous practices existing in the Auckland collieries as reported by Inspector Bennie, and also as to a clause in the Coal-mines Bill which would enable those practices to be suppressed. In reply to that request you furnished this statement, dated 15/8/14, signed by you: "The Under-Secretary for Mines.—The following are particulars regarding the dangerous practices existing at the Auckland Collieries, as reported by Inspector Bennie this month; also the clauses printed in the Coal-mines Bill, which will enable those practices to be suppressed. The urgency of the matter must be evident—FRANK REED, Inspecting Engineer of Mines, 15/8/14:—

Name of Colliery.	Dangerous Conditions reported by Inspector Bennie for July, 1914.	Coal-mines Act.	Remedy provided in Coal-mines Bill.
Taupiri Coal-mines (Limited)	Firedamp prevalent; several miners burnt by ignitions of gas. (Disastrous explosion possible).—F.R.	No provision in Act to enable Inspector to order the use of safety-lamps only	Clause 7 (h) (iii) that no lamp other than a locked safety-lamp shall be allowed or used in any place in a mine in which there is likely to be any quantity of inflammable gas as to render the use of naked lights dangerous.
Waipa Collieries (Limited)	Bords (working-places) are driven 18 ft. wide, being too wide for safety, as falls of roof are liable and have occurred. (The most prolific cause of mining fatalities).—F. R.	No provision in Act for Inspector to regulate width of bords	Clause 14 (4) (8) gives Inspector power to have workmen withdrawn. Clause 9 provides for making additional rules to regulate width of bords; also clause 18 (a). Also clause (46B) (f) gives power to workmen's inspector to notify manager of a dangerous part of a mine.
Hikurangi Coal Company (Limited)	The manager, who has been convicted for breaches of the Coal-mines Act, is now extracting coal from under the main haulage-drive. The mine is collapsing, and is on fire in one section (the Night-caps Mine disaster was thus caused).—F.R.	No provision in Act for Inspector to prevent workmen entering a dangerous place, and to prevent manager working his mine in a dangerous manner	Clause 14 (4) (3) gives Inspector power to have workmen withdrawn.

That is your statement?—Yes.