

20. *Electricity underground.*—Details of the electrical plant in this mine are set out above. We think that electricity played no part in the origin of this explosion. In our opinion the use of electricity underground in mines should not be forbidden. The strictest care should, however, be exercised by the Inspector of Mines in regard to the nature and type of plant, and the places where it is to be used, before permission to install it is given.

21. *General Management of Mine.*—The staff consisted of a general manager, a certificated mine-manager, an underviewer, two deputies, and an electrician. There were about one hundred and forty men employed in and about the mine, one hundred underground and forty on the surface.

At the date of the disaster the general manager was away from the district, having been off on sick-leave for about three weeks.

On account of the rapid increase in the number of the working-faces the number of miners employed had been steadily increasing, and the number of staff had not kept pace with the increase in the number of miners. We think that on the 3rd December the mine was somewhat understaffed.

We have referred above to the failure to keep a check on lamps daily issued, and the failure to ensure that coal was properly holed or cut before being fired. There was also a failure to make a search for matches and tobacco, as required by Regulation 189.

Subject to these comments, the mine appears to have been satisfactorily managed.

22. *Inspection by Inspector of Mines.*—In April, 1925, the Minister of Mines, by memorandum to the Under-Secretary, intimated that he had reasons for believing that gas would be met in considerable quantity in Dobson Mine, and directed that a close watch should be kept on the operations, and that every precaution should be taken in the interests of the safety of the men. Pursuant to this direction, and in consequence of his own observations, the Inspector of Mines for the district has throughout given special attention to Dobson Mine. In our view the inspection by the Inspector has been thorough and efficient throughout.

This combined district is a large one, and contains a substantial number of collieries. We suggest that the Department look into this question with a view to considering whether an additional Inspector should be appointed here.

With regard to inspection of mines generally in New Zealand, we are of opinion that every requisition made by a District Inspector of Mines to a mine-manager relating to any matter in a mine, whether made at the time of any visit or otherwise, should be forthwith put into writing and handed or forwarded to such manager.

23. *Inspection by Workmen's Inspectors.*—This inspection was regularly done, and we consider that it has been carried out conscientiously and with moderation. A fuller account by workmen's inspectors in their reports to the management of their respective examinations of the mine would, we think, be an advantage. The Inspector for the district stated in evidence that he had received very great assistance from the workmen's inspectors.

24. *Rescue Brigades.*—We are of opinion that in the set of circumstances existing here loss of life would not have been averted or reduced had the services of a rescue brigade been available. On the contrary, we think that the miners, in their endeavour to succour their comrades, might have taken unjustifiable risks, and that the death-roll might have been increased.

Cases may, however, arise where the services of a rescue brigade would be of value. The important thing is to have a group of men properly trained and efficiently controlled. In a colliery district like the one now under consideration a central depot available for all collieries in the locality, where teams of men would be trained and gas-helmets and other accessories would be kept, might prove of value. The matter is one which the Department might profitably discuss with mine-owners with a view to devising a practicable scheme.