

he will perhaps soon have to hold a post-mortem examination that will prove this. He is willing to state this if he is brought before a Board—that it is only a matter of a year or two.

15. The question of the payment up to the date of a miner's death has often been brought up before. I am certain the Minister will agree that the present system is most unfair. If a man dies a day before his monthly pension is due his widow gets nothing?—That is so.

16. As to the arrangement about fugitive earnings, there is no law permitting what is now being allowed, but the Hon. Mr. Anderson, on one of his visits to Waihi, received a deputation from the Miners' Union, and he agreed that these small earnings, so long as they were for outdoor work, would not be taken notice of by the Commissioner of Pensions?—I should say that where such work is quite out-of-doors no notice should be taken of it. When once a man has been certified by a doctor to be totally incapacitated for his calling he should get his full pension. No man will apply for the pension until he is really done for. To show how far gone men usually are before they apply, I may say that in the five years for which I have been secretary of the Miners' Union nearly one hundred applications for pensions have gone through my hands. Out of those only two applications have been refused, and most of the one hundred applicants are already dead. Men sometimes wait for months before they will apply, and all that time they are worrying. There is a man I know waiting now, and he is worrying. I cannot see why they should have to wait so long as they do for decisions when they do apply. One man lately received his pension after waiting a long time, and had received just two instalments when he died.

*Hon. Mr. Veitch* : As regards the casual earnings, I understood that my predecessor had given instructions that the old rule was to be relaxed, and I agreed that that relaxation should be continued. As there seems to be doubt on the point in some districts, I will give instructions that Mr. Anderson's system shall be continued, though it is really a breach of the law, and I am not entitled to do it. Moreover, I do not want too much publicity given to the arrangement. On the other hand, the Prime Minister has given an undertaking, and Cabinet has agreed, that the whole matter of miner's pensions shall be reviewed, to see if we can improve the position. As to the terms in detail, I do not yet know what I shall recommend Cabinet to do. In the meantime the practice that was in operation in regard to casual earnings when I came into office will be kept going. I will see that the officers of the Department understand that.

*Witness* : There are instances in which men in receipt of the pension will not sign the white paper if they are earning a single penny.

17. *The Chairman*.] Is it your experience that a miner suffering from this disease may be feeling quite well one day and be down and out for the next week?—Possibly he will keep quite well for a few weeks, provided that he avoids exerting himself to any extent. There are times when he can do a little light work, but he does not know the day when he will be knocked down again, so he cannot take any permanent work. One day he will be all right, and the next day he will be in bed, where he will have to stay for three or four days.

18. Under section 33 of the Pensions Act, 1926, which provides for the miner's phthisis pension, a man has to be totally incapacitated before he can enjoy the pension. Is not total incapacity a most difficult thing to define?—There is no doubt about that. As regards mining, I should say that a man is totally incapacitated when he can do no underground work.

19. Would you be in favour of an amendment of the Act providing that a medical certificate certifying phthisis should be taken for the pension, rather than have the difficult definition of total incapacity in the Act?—Yes.

20. Then you would be prepared to have a certificate from a medical man that the sufferer should receive the pension, rather than require that his condition should conform to a legal definition?—Yes. I would like to see the Act amended by providing that all miners should be examined under the X rays every six months. When a man's incapacity for mining is shown he should get the pension, and not be allowed to work underground.

21. Do you think the rate of pension—£1 15s. a week for married men or widowers, and £1 5s. for unmarried men—is an adequate one?—Absolutely not.

22. What is your experience of the case when a pensioner has to go into hospital? What benefit does he then receive by the pension?—He really receives no benefit. The Hospital Board can take up to its full charge of three guineas a week, and towards this it takes the whole of his pension. In some cases the Board allows him a few shillings a week, but in other instances the Board takes the whole of it. Sometimes this allowance is 5s. a week. Under the Act the Board must take over his pension certificate.

23. You have had a case, have you not, in Reefton where a pensioner repeatedly complained because he did not receive a little pension-money to buy tobacco, or cigarettes, &c. : worries of that kind did not contribute to his peace of mind?—In point of fact that helped to kill the man. He would have lived a little longer if he had not been harrassed over his hospital account and his pension.

24. *Hon. Mr. Veitch*.] Has the Hospital Board power to take over a man's pension-certificate?—Full power under the Pensions Act, when once the man is in hospital.

25. Does that apply to all pensioners?—Yes.

26. *The Chairman*.] Would you be in favour of medical practitioners resident in a mining district being officially recognized and gazetted as specialists in miner's phthisis?—Yes.

27. When suffering miners have to go to Christchurch or other distant places, what is the effect, in your opinion, of the journey upon the man?—In some cases it is very bad. Men will not apply for the pension until they are really down, and after the journey to Christchurch they come back very much exhausted.

28. What has it cost some men to get the pension?—I know of cases where many pounds have gone in expenses.