

29. *Mr. Samuel.*] Does not the Government provide for those expenses?—It pays bare fares, board, and travelling-expenses.

30. *The Chairman.*] There is provision in the Act for the payment of £20 for miners' funerals. What is your experience in that matter?—On some occasions, about a year ago, no mourners' car was provided to carry the Minister and the pall-bearers. Mr. Bellamy had the contract from the Pensions Department, and his account was for £17 10s. for funerals from Waiuta, and £15 for Reefton funerals. He wanted to make them no more than paupers' funerals. We objected to that. We claimed that if a man died for the industry in which he worked he was entitled to be buried more decently than that. In some cases it has cost the union a good deal to put on cars from Waiuta—sometimes £4 or £5 more than was allowed by the Pensions Department, and we got no refund.

31. The Act provides that the widow shall receive a pension on the death of a pensioner under the miner's phthisis clause. Have there not been cases in which miners have shifted from Reefton to other districts for health and climatic reasons, and have died at their new abode, and the doctor of such a non-mining district, being unfamiliar with this disease, has not certified pneumoconiosis as the cause of death and thereby the widow has been barred from the pension?—Yes.

32. In view of the fact that the principle underlying the widow's miner's pension, is the recognition of the fact that the miner sufferer dies at a comparatively early age, would you favour the granting of the pension to a miner's widow by reason of the fact that her husband had received the pension?—Yes.

33. Is it not a pure technicality that pensions have been refused to such women?—Yes. One man who died in Reefton had been receiving the pension for a considerable time, and his widow received no pension.

MARK FAGAN examined. (No. 2.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your full name?—Mark Fagan.

2. You have had many years of experience in mining?—Yes; roughly speaking, sixteen years—from 1909 to 1925.

3. I understand that you wish to give evidence on the general question of miner's phthisis?—Yes, at the request of the Inangahua miners, to supplement the evidence of Mr. McKane. From 1909 to 1925 I was general secretary of the Inangahua Gold and Coal Miners' Union, and workmen's inspector in the mines. In that capacity I had frequently to take the cases of the miners in the Arbitration Court. In those cases the aspect of the health of the miners frequently came under review. Naturally, that was part of the union's case, and in preparing for the case I had often to go to the office of the Registrar of Deaths in Reefton, to ascertain exactly what was happening in the industry in regard to mortality. Up to the time of the last case I conducted, in 1923, there had been 202 deaths in Reefton from miner's phthisis. Besides that a considerable number of men left the district, withdrawing from the industry in alarm at the state of their health, and many of them died away from Reefton. Of those cases we had no record, but it is certain that 202 is a conservative number.

4. *Mr. Bodkin.*] From what record did you take those figures?—From the Deaths Register at the Reefton Courthouse. That state of affairs left something like a stigma upon the industry, and towards the end of my term of office many men went away, getting afraid to continue in the occupation of mining. Because of the prominence given to the health aspect of the miner's calling many amendments were made in the Mining Act, such as improvement of the ventilation in the mines, better changing-rooms, bathhouses, a Saturday half-holiday, and better sanitation, with the view of making the occupation more healthy. In my opinion these precautions stopped short of what should have been done. Speaking from my experience of sixteen years I should say that if the right thing had been done in 1916 or 1917, immediately after the Mines Commission sat, miner's phthisis could have been stamped out of this country. I am sure that it would have been possible to have made it non-existent to-day.

5. What steps could have been taken that would have had that effect?—Compulsory X-ray examination of all miners. In South Africa, where, I suppose, there are five hundred miners employed for every man we have in the industry in New Zealand, the problem has been handled along those lines. The situation there became so serious that a Commission was set up, consisting of three mining engineers and two medical practitioners. That Commission sat for six years, and as the result of its reports the law was amended by providing that all miners should be regularly examined under the X rays. It is claimed that by that means about 75 per cent. of miner's phthisis has been stamped out. At Broken Hill, again, the problem has been dealt with on the same practical lines. In South Africa, and also at Broken Hill, these examinations take place yearly, and unless the employee can bring back a certificate of health, showing that he is clear of the disease, he cannot resume his occupation—he leaves the employment of the mining company. As the direct result of very lengthened inquiries made both in Africa and at Broken Hill, it was proved beyond question that the disease is highly contagious. That was the strongest point made in both those countries. The Commissions in those countries laid it down, and it is agreed by medical men in New Zealand who are conversant with the complaint, that there are two definite stages of the disease. The first is the state of silicosis, or silica on the lung. When the miner is examined under the X rays and it is found that his lungs show in general silicosis, he is not allowed to enter the mine again, and the disease is arrested at that stage. Under the existing conditions in New Zealand the miner is allowed to go beyond that stage, and the second stage is what is known as miner's phthisis. That is really tuberculosis superimposed upon silicosis. Both in Africa and at Broken Hill it was agreed that when a man contracted silicosis his vitality suffered, the condition of his lungs became weakened, and to the tuberculosis germ he became much the same as a hollow tree in the bush to the honey-bee. When a man is in the first stage—that is, when his lungs show the condition of silicosis—he is not permitted