

20. Take the men already in the mines, who will probably contract the disease, or who may have it now: besides the X-ray examination, you would also agree that the medical examination should take place?—Yes.

21. Is there not something else besides the medical examination of the man? Take the history of the field: are not certain stopes and winzes definitely known to be death traps?—Yes.

22. Do you not know of mines in Reefton as to which every man who has worked in a particular winze or level has died from miner's phthisis?—Yes.

23. Would it be an advantage if some kind of history could be obtained by the Mines Department of those places?—Such a thing would be valuable as showing that every one who has worked in a given mine, or section of a mine, has died from or contracted miner's phthisis. I worked in one quartz-mine from 1906 to 1909, and of the 120 fellow-workers those who are still living I could count them on the fingers of one hand.

24. Do you think the X-ray examinations would prevent men who might get the disease from going into a mine? So far as the improved conditions are concerned, would you say that the industry can still carry on?—Yes. The conditions that made it difficult and expensive to the mine-owners were brought into operation because of the recommendations of the Mines Commission, which led to the use of water-liner drills, provision of proper changing-rooms, and various other improvements, besides the giving of a half-holiday on Saturday, so adding to the overhead cost of mining. Nothing has been done since. We stopped short of what I suggest was the logical thing to have done—to have required that every man working in a mine should have a clean bill of health. By that means we could have cleaned up the whole of a mine. With the number of men we have to deal with we could stamp out the disease in a couple of years. Not only would it be a good thing from the humanitarian point of view, but from the Pensions Department's point of view we would be studying economy, because we would be extinguishing the pensions.

25. Would it not be a good thing if the Act were amended in such a way as to provide for a hardship clause, whereby the Minister of Pensions could grant pensions by getting over technicalities such as have been mentioned?—I think a better idea would be reciprocity between the Commonwealth Government and our own in connection with New Zealand pensioners living in Australia, and Australian pensioners living in New Zealand.

THURSDAY, 26TH SEPTEMBER, 1929.

MARK FAGAN further examined. (No. 3.)

1. *The Chairman.*] I understand that you desire to elaborate a point made in your evidence in chief before the Committee?—There is just one point as to which I wish to avoid being misunderstood, in connection with my suggestion that if all miners were examined by means of the X rays once a year, miner's phthisis as we know it now would be stamped out of New Zealand in two or three years. After I left the Committee-room it occurred to me that I might have been misunderstood. I do not want the medical examination that I suggested to be confounded with the examinations that were in operation in 1908. In that year miner's phthisis was included as an "accident" in the then Workers' Compensation Act, and it was compulsory for all miners to get examined at the beginning of 1909 before they could go to work. A strike took place at Waihi and Reefton as a protest against that examination, because the miners considered that when this examination took place they were not being examined for miner's phthisis, but that a general examination was effected, and that if they had any other defects or disabilities, that would interfere with their getting employment. I do not want that to be confused with the examination I suggested. The examination I have now suggested would result in an X-ray photograph of the condition of the miner's lungs. It would be taken through his clothing, and no other part of his body need be examined. As I said before, I think that if that were done, it would go a long way towards stamping out the disease. Once a year a man's lungs could be examined, without other medical examination. I am sure that the same objections that were made in 1908 or 1909 would not be raised.

2. *Mr. Hamilton.*] Is this disease infectious, that you consider that it could be stamped out in the way you suggest?—It is. It starts as silicosis, and the second stage is tuberculosis, superimposed upon the silicosis. When that arrives it takes the form of consumption, and the man's spittle and breath become infectious, and doubly dangerous because of working in vitiated air and confined places. Undoubtedly contagion takes place in the mines of New Zealand to-day, because infected men are allowed to work in them.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. Samuel, M.P.: The several petitions speak for themselves, and so do the departmental reports upon them. In my opinion the whole matter of these petitions hinges upon the medical examination. In these cases—and I know of many others in the Waihi district—there is a decided conflict of medical evidence and opinion. The two medical men of Waihi are held in the same kind of esteem as other doctors in mining towns—that is, they are thoroughly reliable, and the miners and other people of the district have every confidence in them. As far as Waihi is concerned, there are two very eminent members of the medical profession in residence—Dr. Murray Cole, who is Superintendent of the Waihi Hospital, and has been in practice there for a considerable number of years,