

*West Wanganui District.*

6. *Wallsend Colliery, Collingwood.*—Visited on the 17th March last, at which date twenty-four men were employed. As the seam varies much in thickness, being nowhere very large, and the usual bands of shale are still present, the working is rendered very expensive. The air seemed pretty good, and after an uprise, which was momentarily expected to thirl, had made a communication between the two districts, it would doubtless be better. Last year the brake-band on the surface-incline gave way, and caused considerable damage. Fortunately, no one was injured, and the defective machinery has since been replaced by a new drum and gear. Reports are duly kept, as is also a plan; but boys are illegally employed, and the rules are not properly exhibited.

*Westport District.*

7. *Mokihinui Coal-mine, Mokihinui.*—This mine has again made a commencement, and has been twice visited. In December last three men only were working below, the majority of the staff being employed on surface-work. The coal-seam in the heading had at that time become disturbed by a fault, and has since divided into two separate seams, separated by a band of dirt. At my last visit—in March—I examined the outcrops in Coal Creek, where several places occur at which workings could be commenced. Each outcrop, however, appears to be accompanied by some dislocation of the strata. As no definite workings have been carried on, the Act is not observed.

8. *Koranui Coal-mine, Westport.*—During 1885 this property passed into the hands of the Union Steamship Company (Limited), who have raised the output from 5,989 tons in 1884 to 30,539 tons in 1885. The coal appears to be getting harder, but the field is still much traversed by faults. On the 24th March last eighty-seven men were employed, of whom sixty-three were below-ground. The air was moderately good, and timbering, &c., attended to. Reports also were kept; but the register of boys was incomplete. Speaking generally, Mr. Jemison seems to observe the law, though the ventilation is not very excellent. The expense incident upon upwards of three miles of surface-haulage still continues, and will do so, as the workings are gradually extending further from the incline. A project has been mooted to start at No. 4 brake, and run a line round the hill to tap the base of the coalfield. Small locomotives would then be used for haulage, and, no doubt, a saving would be effected.

9. *Banbury Coal-mine, Westport.*—The output from this mine has been most unfortunately diminished by a very lengthened and determined strike, which lasted nearly seven months, and, together with an unusually bad harbour, caused a reduction in the output of 26,717 tons. In August I found that boys were in the habit of entering the mine before 8 a.m., and of staying at work therein until 4.30 p.m., or upwards of eight hours and a half, without counting the time required for coming out. As this was by no means permissible, I wrote to Mr. T. Brown, the new manager of the mine, requiring compliance with the law, which was at once responded to. This, however, did not meet with the approval of the Miners' Union, who wrote to the Minister of Mines pointing out that, firstly, the boys' wages were reduced; and that, secondly, by coming out early they encountered the danger of walking on the endless-chain road during working-hours. Having been directed to investigate this matter, I met on the 1st December last a deputation from the committee of the Miners' Mutual Protection Society, who appeared desirous of extending the hours during which boys may be legally employed below-ground. On this point I was able to offer no encouragement. Regarding the complaint as to the danger of walking on the chain-road during working-hours, in the report for last year will be found a notice of a new road which Mr. Elliott was making; but, unfortunately, owing to inequalities in the seam, the formation of this road has become so costly that its completion is impracticable. Another course open was, naturally, for boys to walk over the surface and enter by one of the numerous adits; the objection to this being the wet weather, which is exceedingly prevalent. There were, altogether, only five boys who were affected by this section. The workings are now all in the thick seam, of which only 16ft. is worked, the remaining 3ft. being left to support the roof, which is bad. The ventilation, in spite of having received a large amount of attention, is still not good; nor can it, indeed, be reasonably expected to be so when a 6-foot fan, driven by manual labour, is the motive-power. However, the men speak of it as much improved, and it is to be hoped that before long the company will be in a sufficiently-permanent field to make the erection of a capable fan advisable. On the 25th March my latest inspection was made. The mine was at work, but, owing to the frequent fractures of the endless chain, very little coal was coming out. Several improvements in the hauling-plant have been made, but it still works badly. The coal varies somewhat in thickness and quality, and in my opinion Mr. Brown is taking out too large a proportion at the first working. Altogether the mine seems to be managed with a considerable amount of attention to safety and the provisions of the Act.

10. *Murray Creek Coal-mine, Reefton.*—This is a good example of the average Reefton coal-mine, the method of working which, with its attendant waste and insecurity, I have frequently had to mention. On the 18th August last the working-place was very unsafe, being completely gutted and unsupported by timber. Mr. Trennery, the owner, to whom I spoke on the subject, informed me that it would be closed in a couple of days. On the 27th November the workings had assumed a partially open-work character, and looked a little better. On the 2nd April the place was temporarily abandoned.