

## GENERAL

With regard to the coal areas at Golden Bay, we recommend that great care be taken to prevent leases being taken up for merely speculative purposes, and that the foreshore rights to the bay be strictly preserved for the use of the public.

The Coal-mines Act, with its amendments and regulations, appear to work satisfactorily on the whole, and we were unable to obtain any tangible suggestion for their amendment or alteration, except those contained in the following letter from the Trades and Labour Councils Conference. Should our recommendations thereon be adopted a slight alteration will be required in the Act. Some of our other recommendations would probably require a substantive Act of the Legislature :—

“ Wellington Trades and Labour Council,  
Trades Hall, Wellington, 14th May, 1901.

“ SIR,—

“ I have the honour, by direction of the Trades and Labour Councils Conference, held recently in Dunedin, to forward, for the consideration of the Commission which has been set up to inquire into the working of the coal-mines of New Zealand, the following recommendations :—

- “ (1.) That section 33, subsection (46), of ‘The Coal-mines Act, 1891,’ be amended by striking out after the words ‘in a mine may’ the words ‘at their own cost,’ and substituting in lieu thereof the words ‘at the cost of the Government.’
- “ (2.) That a provision be inserted in the Coal-mines Act compelling mine-owners to conduct a sufficient quantity of pure air, by brattice or otherwise, to within 15 ft. of every working-face.
- “ (3.) That the Coal-mines Act be amended so as to compel mine-owners to provide travelling-roads for the workmen as near as consistent to the main entrance to the mine.
- “ (4.) That in all main air-courses in coal-mines where stoppings are required, such stoppings shall be made of brick or crib-logging.
- “ (5.) That in all cases where safety-lamps are used in coal-mines a ‘tester’ be provided for the purpose of testing all lamps before they are allowed to be taken into the mine.
- “ (6.) And that no person be allowed to have charge of a coal-face unless he has had not less than two years’ previous experience in a coal-mine.

“ I might state that the whole of these recommendations are made at the instance of the representatives of the Coal-miners’ Union of the west coast of the South Island, who were present at the Conference. As each of the recommendations are in the direction of minimising as far as possible, the danger which exists in the working of all coal-mines, and have for their sole object the protection and welfare of men working in the mines, the Conference felt confident that your Commission would give the several matters mentioned due consideration.

“ I remain, &c.,

“ W. R. Haselden, Esq.,  
“ Chairman, Royal Commission on Coal-mines.”

“ A. H. COOPER,  
“ Conference Secretary.”

To which we returned the following reply :—

“ SIR,—

“ Coal-mines Commission, 15th May, 1901.

“ I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 14th instant, covering recommendations made by the Trades and Labour Councils Conference recently held in Dunedin, with a view to obtaining certain amendments in the law relating to coal-mines.

“ The Commissioners are very pleased to obtain these representations from the Conference, and will give them their earnest and attentive consideration.

“ I have, &c.,

“ W. R. HASELDEN, Chairman.

“ Mr. A. H. Cooper, Secretary, Trades and Labour  
Councils Conference, Trades Hall, Wellington.”

Dealing with the recommendations seriatim, we beg to report as follows :—

(1.) The proposed alterations would be contrary to the interests of the employed, and would in a great measure deprive them of the safeguard afforded by the appointment and payment by themselves of two check inspectors. If these inspectors were paid by the Government the men would lose most of the control they now have over them, and the check inspectors themselves would be looked upon in much the same way as the present Government Inspectors. The cost of paying the check inspectors for their one or two days’ work a month is very trifling when divided among a body of men, and the employés, in our opinion, would be unwise to have the alteration asked for.

(2.) Section 33 of the Coal-mines Act, subsection (1), provides that an adequate amount of ventilation, that is not less than 100 cubic feet of pure air per minute for each person and animal, shall sweep undiminished along the airway through each working-place. Properly interpreted and enforced, we think this provision is sufficient. A rigid rule of bringing the air to within 15 ft. of every working-face would be difficult to comply with in every case. The matter really falls under the requirement of stricter supervision and enforcement of the law than has been always the case hitherto, and we think that with strict enforcement the present law is sufficient.

(3.) If this recommendation means that a separate and distinct road be provided solely for the use of the workmen in going to and from their work, we think that it would be impossible to enforce. Section 40 of the Act provides that, within a year after commencing the working of bords, stalls, or long-wall workings in any mine, there shall be made and completed at least two separate and distinct shafts or outlets to the surface from such mine intercommunicating with each other,