

to the conclusion that it would be better to seal none of these old workings off at all unless in consequence of fire. What we ask is that there should be brick or log stoppings put in where the workings are sealed off, with proper gauges put in, so that there should be a proper amount of air in the workings and round the faces. The Coal-mines Act gives no power for any more than 100 cubic feet of air for every man, boy, and horse in the mine. Supposing you have 30 acres of ground worked and you have to seal that off. You have to produce 100 cubic feet of air for these people, and simply turn the place into a gasometer. So we say that as the work proceeds and matters advance there should be more provided so as to clear these workings of dangerous gases. When we consider the Mount Kemble disaster we find that it was caused through a fall in the old workings, and we think that instead of the air being so-much per head for every man, horse, and boy, it should apply to acreages as well as in the case of old workings. We consider this is a very necessary thing, and hope you will take it into your consideration. As regards putting more air in a mine, I may say that it is a question that requires more engineering skill than can be expected from a common workman, who desires to put the matter before Parliament as it should be put. We think that if old workings are sealed off they should be cleared of inflammable gases, which should not be allowed to be stored up. There is another little matter that I would like to mention. We find that it is provided in the Gold-mines Act that no lad can go into a mine to work under the age of fourteen, and I would like a similar provision inserted in the Coal-mines Act. I have various reasons for urging that. Within the last two years in our district the old system of passing standards in our public schools has been done away with, and it is possible now for a boy to pass two standards in the one year, if he is capable of doing so, with the result that many lads can get out of school now at twelve years of age. Their people cannot afford to keep them at home, and, naturally want them to go to work, and therefore I think the Act should be altered to prevent these young people going to work in a mine under the age of fourteen.

21. *Mr. J. Allen.*] How can they pass two standards in the one year?—It is a matter of giving the bright boy an opportunity to go ahead. That is what the Education Board is doing.

22. *Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] Do you know of any case where a boy under thirteen years of age has been put into a mine?—No; but we are frightened they will come in.

Mr. J. Allen: It cannot be done under the Act.

23. *Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] Although a lad might pass the Sixth Standard at twelve years he cannot go into a coal-mine until after he is thirteen?—That is so, but we want it made up to fourteen years of age. We think that is young enough for any lad to go into a mine, or to be employed about a mine.

24. *Mr. J. Allen.*] With regard to the question of explosives, what suggestion have you to make to get over the difficulty of determining what is the best explosive?—Some one would certainly have to inspect the explosives. It is mentioned here that the Government would have to do so.

25. Every time an explosive was used or sent to the mine it would have to be certified to? It would be a very difficult matter?—It would be a matter for consideration how to get at it.

26. With regard to the accident fund being made available for death and sickness: I suppose you know the principle on which the Workers' Compensation for Accidents legislation has been put upon the statute-book—that is, the general principle is that the industry should bear the cost of the accident?—Yes.

27. Could you apply that principle to sickness that did not occur through the industry at all?—What we are asking for is this: that if a coal-miner lies in his home sick, say for three months, and then dies, the same remuneration that is provided of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a ton shall be paid as if he were killed in the mine, so long as he belonged to the mine. Under the accident fund if a man goes to work for a day and is killed he is brought under the fund just the same as if he had been working in the mine for fifty years.

28. That is in the course of his employment, but what I want to know is why the industry should bear it for sickness that is not caused through his employment?—We say that the man may have been working there for years and helped to accumulate the fund. Is it not very hard that his family should in such a case not get the relief?

29. Is there sufficient money in the fund to bear this?—There is down our way.

30. But you want to consolidate it?—Yes.

31. Well, would it bear it?—Yes, I think there is ample.

32. Do you know what amount is received and spent in the fund now?—No; I could not tell you the general thing right through.

33. Are you aware that the receipts last year were £893 and the expenditure £725 for the whole of the colony?—Those figures surprise me.

34. You think that even if the sickness occurs, not through his employemnt in the industry, and death ensues, the industry should bear it?—I do.

35. With regard to the question of superannuation, what general principle have you to suggest?—I have said that I would not say much about that; I would not commit myself on that.

36. With regard to the pay-sheets, does not every miner get a pay-ticket setting out every item?—He does.

37. What is your difficulty about getting them?—We cannot get them from the men. Sometimes they say they have lost them and we cannot get them.

38. Is that a difficulty that cannot be overcome?—I may tell you that it cost our union something like £25 last year for collecting these tickets, and then we were something like one-third short.

39. Do you not think that if an employer gives an employee a full statement of his wages, that is all you can reasonably ask of him?—Well, the Labour Department Bill gives the Inspector power under certain conditions to inspect books, and all we ask is that we shall be able to get references from these books, because it would facilitate matters considerably for us. As I said before, at the last sitting