

151. Supposing a man left the colony—because there are men who come and go?—We would rather the scheme applied to the permanent hands.

152. Have you any objection to gold-miners being included?—We would be quite willing if they got the gold royalty.

153. The more lives you had in it the more likely the scheme would stand?—Yes, but the gold-mining industry has no charge on it, while the coal industry has.

154. Have you ever considered the question of compulsory insurance for people working in a mine?—Yes, but the point we hold is that the industry ought to bear its own evils.

155. *Mr. Smith.*] You want to insure sufficient funds for burying a man if he dies through sickness?—Yes.

156. If he belongs to a friendly society, would that not meet the case?—We have to keep a doctor out of our own earnings, and then if we belong to a friendly society we have to subscribe for two doctors. It costs us 1s. a week for the doctor independently of the medical fund.

157. Do you not think it would have been better, if you want a superannuation scheme, to have gone into it actuarially and come prepared?—Yes, it would have been better, no doubt.

158. It is a very deep question?—Yes.

159. Would it not be better to drop it and allow it to come up at some future time?—Yes; I am quite willing to do that.

160. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] You are working for the Westport Coal Company?—I am.

161. You understand the medical examination that the men have to pass before they are allowed to work?—Yes.

162. Have your union any objection to it?—They disapprove of it.

163. You consider it objectionable?—Yes.

164. Do you know the list of requirements?—I know it is the severest test in the country. I know the examination is a very, very stringent one.

165. *The Chairman.*] Can you tell us why this medical test has been imposed?—Well, previously the company did their insurance through some accident company, but now they do it themselves.

166. How long have they been doing it themselves?—I could not tell you from memory.

167. Is it over four years?—I do not think it is over four years, but it is over two years.

168. And that is the reason of the severe test now—because the company is doing its own insurance under the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act?—Yes. If a man goes off for a week he has to go through the examination again.

169. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Can you tell the Committee what they pay for accidents?—They put 3d. per ton extra on the coal for that.

GEORGE NEWTON examined. (No. 3.)

170. *The Chairman.*] You are a miner from Brunnerton?—Yes.

171. Do you hold any office in the union there?—I am president of the Coal-miners' Union.

172. Will you kindly give the Committee your opinion as to the suggestions that have been put forward by the Trades and Labour Council?—I will just deal with one or two. I will take No. 16, dealing with the use of safety-lamps where various sections of a mine contain inflammable gas and are connected one with the other by workings of any description. I have had a long experience in mining and have worked in a good many gassy mines in the old Country. I have also had a little experience of gassy mines in New Zealand, and I quite concur that this clause 16 should be inserted in the Act to prevent the using of mixed lights in such mines. There is no question that if they had been using all safety-lamps in the Brunner mine that explosion would not have occurred. About fifteen months ago a similar thing occurred, but the men were all working with safety-lamps. If that had not been the case there would have been a recurrence of the accident. Just as we were going into the mine one morning a heavy fall came away, and some of the men met the concussion of this fall, which put their lights right out. A sufficient quantity of gas was there to cause an explosion similar to the previous one if mixed lights had been in use. The miners are not satisfied with the present regulations, and hence they want to make it compulsory that wherever there is known to be inflammable gas in part of the mine connected with workings safety-lamps shall be used. I have a report here from the check inspector at the same mine, and will read it to the Committee: "Brunner, 4th August, 1905.—This is to certify that we have examined all the working-places in the Brunner Mine and found them in good working-order. All the roadways and air-courses in good condition, plenty of good mining-timber on hand. We have also examined the report-books and found them up to date. No gas reported. Tyneside Mine: This is to certify that we have this day examined all the working-places in the Tyneside Mine, and found them all in good working-order. Roadways and air-courses in good condition, plenty of good mining-timber on hand. We have also examined all report-books and found gas reported by the fireman nearly every day in one or two places.—THOS. JONES, JOSEPH BEYNON." I might say that in the last annual report the Inspector gave he said that gas had been seen once in the Tyneside Mine, and I want to give an explanation on that particular point. It had only been seen once by the check inspector, but the reason for that is that they go in at mid-day when the men have been at work for a half-shift. The deputies examine the mine and they have reported gas not less than three or four times every week in their report-book, and the Government Inspector has never mentioned that in his report.

173. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] Have you made any complaint or referred to it in any way?—I do not know that we have ever mentioned it.

174. Have you complained to any one?—It was written in the deputies' report. It was written that gas was seen over three days in the week on an average in one or two places.