

drive between 6 and 7 levels, where William Kelly was burned on the 9th July ultimo. Mr. Fletcher, with a safety-lamp, examined the place over the drive timbers and found CH_4 gas. The quantity was small. The canvas is hung across the drive, but not close up to the back of the drive, so that the air may sweep the gas out of the cavity over the timbers. I advised that the debris between the side slabs near the top of the drive be cleared, so as to allow the air to more effectively sweep into the cavity. That was done late the same day, and the gas cleared out."

127. *Mr. Newton.*] I want to ask some questions with regard to that letter of the 7th August. You say in that letter, "I as Inspector of Mines receive no help from the Miners' Union or their check inspectors, who are as at present constituted the creation of the mining company's directors": now, what did you mean by that, Mr. Bennie, "as at present constituted"?—I meant to say that from a general expression of opinion by Mr. Dixon and Mr. Stewart, who formed this union, it was generally believed that they were the agents of the mining company.

128. Generally believed by whom?—By the miners. Whether they were right or wrong, that was the opinion expressed.

129. Was Mr. Dixon an inspector at the time of the strike?—I do not think so.

130. You say the opinion was generally expressed at the time of the strike?—No, at the close of the strike, when the new union was formed by Stewart and Dixon, who were the agents of the mining company.

131. But they were not the check inspectors. You say you received no help from the check inspectors?—That is so.

132. And you say that was the general opinion of the miners?—Yes.

133. The miners formed the union—they were the union—they were the members of the union?—They say, under coercion.

134. You got your information from whom?—I formed my opinion from the expressions of opinions given by the miners.

135. Whom do you mean—there are about six hundred here?—I cannot individualize; I cannot say.

136. You cannot say from whom you got this information?—It was the general expression of opinion at Huntly.

137. Have you ever applied to the union for any complaints they had to make?—I have.

138. When?—When Mr. Duncan was secretary. I have asked him frequently, and requested him to accompany me.

138. When was that?—Just before the strike.

140. When was that?—About two years ago.

141. When did you receive the last complaint from anybody connected with the Miners' Union?—I could not say. I said that during the last two years I have received no complaints.

142. Did you ever during the last two years make any application for any complaints?—I cannot say.

143. Then, what did you mean by saying that you received no help during the last two years from the Miners' Union? What help did you require?—My reference was general, to the mines within my district. In North Auckland district, where I have brought several prosecutions against the mine-manager, the Miners' Union have not only not helped me, but they have given evidence for the manager. Those facts were in my mind when I wrote that letter.

144. What prosecutions are you referring to now?—The prosecution of W. R. Dunn, manager, at Hikurangi. I was speaking in general terms of miners' unions throughout my district.

145. The check inspectors are appointed by the Miners' Union and paid by the Miners' Union?—Yes.

146. *Mr. Napier.*] I should like to clear up a chance expression of yours, Mr. Bennie, with regard to the inquest proceedings. You said there was a disposition to hurry matters. Did you mean to suggest that any facts were excluded or any documents not admitted which should have been tendered?—No; but there was a tendency to shorten matters up as much as possible. For instance, I was asked, "Do you agree with Mr. Woods's evidence?" so that there would be no necessity for me to repeat it.

147. Not to duplicate facts already proved?—Yes, that is my meaning.

148. And is it not a fact that, with regard to that letter you produced to Mr. Wilford, that that was summarized in the expression that instructions had been received by you to take legal advice?—Yes.

149. You do not wish to suggest that the inquiry was in any way less thorough because of anything you have said?—No, certainly not.

150. There is a statement in your report to the Under-Secretary when you were corresponding with him about the question of getting legal opinion: you say, "two men were appointed to examine the old workings." You do not add, but I think you mean, that they did examine the old workings?—Yes, I am satisfied they did it, because I have met them myself when I have been on my tours of inspection of the mine.

151. They were appointed exclusively for that purpose?—Yes, and they did it.

152. Referring to the report to the Department where you mention the question of the advisability or otherwise of using safety-lamps, I do not want you to repeat the lengthy letter you wrote, but would I be right in summarizing what you say in this way: that with your knowledge of the mine after five years' continuous inspection, and the full knowledge you had of the method of working adopted, that you did not think it necessary, and would not advise, the compulsory introduction of safety-lamps?—That is so.