PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT
CSR-164

(40)

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Memorandum. MINES DEPARTMENT.

To The Senior Inspector of Mines, Cue, 3rd. April 1958.
Kalgoorlie

re:- Dust Nuisance - Wittenoom Milling Plant.

In accordance with your instructions I visited Wittenoom on Tuesday, 25th March.

In an attempt to eliminate the possibility of the milling conditions being 'window-dressed' for my arrival, as stated by the Union Representative who lodged the complaint, I asked the Airline agent not to book the flight in my name. This was done and there should have been no reason for the visit to have been predicted.

With Inspector Hunt I inspected the milling section within an hour of my arrival and we both agreed that conditions were particularly good. It was the first occasion I have been in the mill when it was operating and seen a really clear atmosphere. There were ofcourse several points from which dust was being emitted; one was the result of a ventilation hood having been left off after maintenance and I noted one or two points which should have been equipped with hoods but had none. I also noticed that some of the intake-flues used for collection of dust, were too far removed from the created concentrations of dust to effectively remove it before it could pollute the mill atmosphere.

I later discussed my inspection with the Manager and Mill Superintendent both of whom had been made aware that my visit was your instuction and had originated through a complaint,the source of which they could not be told. Their guesses as to the origin of the complaint were probably perfectly correct but no indication was given by me. Mr.Thomas stated that he was not happy about the inspection arising through a complaint because he claimed that he was at all times prepared to investigate matters raised by employees. When asked how I found the Mill I told them that I was surprised to see it so good and asked them if it could be maintained that way. I was assured that it definitely could.

I pointed out that no complaint would have been lodged if the Mill was kept in the condition in which I saw it. To this they claimed that they have an agreement whereby certain workers are paid 'dust money' if the collection unit fails and they have to work in excessively dusty conditions. Recently they experienced considerable tr with the collection plant and agreed that conditions were poor ar paid penalty rates accordingly. However, in an attempt to locate cause of the poor performance of the unit they discovered that a governor damper had been forcibly bent from its set and welded po ion and this completely ruined the balance of the unit. Their cla was that an individual, or individuals, in the mill purposely dam the unit so as to receive penalty rates. I did not make much comm during this discussion as I was prepared to lend a sympathetic ea to both parties and try and establish who was giving me the more correct version.

Later that afternoon I was introduced to Mr Reen who sent in the complaint. Reen impressed me as being a very solid type and a man who would not make frivolous statements. He told me that the mill conditions as I saw them were in no way comparable with the normal conditions and stated that although he was baffled as to how my arrival could have been anticipated, he was positive that the

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previous day's maintenance to the dust unit was in preparation for my inspection. He also alleged that as soon as I entered the mill a temporary break-down was staged so as to minimise the quantity of ore in the circuit at that time. A hold up did occur. Regarding his own efforts to have the trouble rectified domestically Reen alleged that the engagement were the best team of listeners he had ever encountered and that unfulfilled promises were his main results. We were then joined by another Rep. named John A.Fletcher who handed me a letter a copy of which is attached. Fletcher is not nearly as reliable as Reen and he made several weak statements which I discounted immediately. Fletcher wanted me to make another inspection that evening because he was sure that conditions would again be unsatisfactory. I told him I would conduct the investigation in my own manner and had decided that if I were to make a snap inspection no person would know of my intention to do so.

The following morning I inspected the underground workings and apart from the need to brattice off some old workings to gain a better air-flow, all other matters were satisfactory.

Before I returned to write up my findings I gave the matter considerable thought. If Reen was substantially correct in his statement regarding the false conditions seen by me then it would be most probable that I would never see the true picture that visit. Hold-ups could easily be staged because they do in practice occur quite often. To make a surprise inspection would probably result in the joke being on me. The management knew that I was booked to leave on Thursday's plane and if they were keeping things in order for my benefit they only had another 20 hours to go before the pressure was off. For this reason they would possibly have welcomed a surprise visit.

To me it appeared best to tackle the problem on their ground. If I had seen window dressed conditions then they had created a standard which would suit the workers, and of their own admission, a standard which could be maintained. I decided to try and tie them down to a set of conditions which may or may not have been specially prepared. The entry for the Record Book was discussed with Inspector Hunt and then typed. I purposely omitted Inspector Hunt from the signing of the report because, as I explained to him, he won't have to qualify any of the findings if questioned after my departure. He only has to see that attention is paid to the points raised by me and therefore can keep clear of any ~~at~~ criticism which may be levelled by either party.

We returned to the mine and I handed the report to the manager. After having read it he indicated his general agreement but wanted me to delete paragraphs 5 and 7. Number 5 was in his opinion a slight on the Mill Superintendent because he had already informed me that Mr. Allen was responsible for the dust collection unit. I pointed out that there was no intended slight on Mr. Allen who as Superintendent was automatically responsible for the unit. However, on the previous day when I asked who looked after the unit I was told that Allen, the Engineer, and the fitting shop foremen all kept their eye on it. I wanted it to be the particular responsibility of one person and para. 5 remained.

Thomas pointed out that they already had an agreement regarding the payment of penalty rates and para. 7 should be omitted. I expressed my revulsion at a Board of Reference agreeing to pay penalties in lieu of adequate working conditions and pointed out that despite the findings of that Board, an Act of Parliament takes precedence over an Award and I would not permit men to work in unhealthy conditions even if the management were prepared to pay extra wages or the men willing to undertake the task. Paragraph 7 remained also.

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This was one of the most unsavoury duties I have had to perform and it has arisen because of the 'small town' atmosphere ever present at Littenoom. Personally, I am inclined to agree with Rep. Reen. I have always been conscious of a managerial attitude of resentment whenever they are asked to attend to some matter relating to operations

for which they already have some person responsible. Even if the complaint is justified and some person neglectful they are non-committal and prefer to delay any action for as long as possible just to indicate that they were not forced into immediate action.

This attitude was evident on this latest occasion. I suggested that a modified flue mouth would permit the intakes to be brought closer to the screens etc. and not result in loss of fibre, and also suggested that a canvas hood could easily be fitted to those sections of the mill where metal hoods cannot be installed because of the relative movement between the parts which permit dust to escape. Such a canvas hood could be secured along the edges with light metal strips which would provide for speedy removal and re-assembly during maintenance. Although the Manager agreed that the suggestions had sound application, he pointed out that the manufacturers of the collection unit would have to be notified if modifications were necessary. This again, was more of a stalling tactic than a necessity. I wanted action regardless of who paid for the modifications, and said so.

I believe that the existing unit could maintain satisfactory conditions but the mill supervisors have got to be shaken out of the apparent attitude of indifference which has grown on them because of past experience in not being able to control the dust. I considered it little credit to the supervisory staff of the mill that they could permit conditions to deteriorate through such minor matters as that of ensuring that a hood was replaced after maintenance.

Although my report was compiled before I revisited the mill and prior to seeing the Manager the conditions were entirely different and far from satisfactory on the Wednesday when I made second inspection. In view of the assurance I had been given the previous day the management were rather embarrassed and had to agree when I pointed out that practically all of the trouble could be readily overcome. I had already covered these eventualities in my report so there was no need to alter it.

I do not know what the re-action of the employees will be. I told Reen that I felt that I covered the question satisfactorily from his point of view but would not discuss the contents of my report with him. It would have to be put up on the notice-board and I had no wish to have the contents of my report to the manager discussed around town before the manager had time to publish it as required. I trust that everyone will now be contented and that no-one will develop heartburn through my visit. On this occasion I felt that strong support had to be given to every justifiable Union complaint because such an attitude may result in future problems being resolved domestically.

DISTRICT INSPECTOR OF MINES, CUE.

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