PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT CSR-289

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The Senior Inspector of Mines, Cue, 27th. September 1961.

Mines Department,

Kalgoorlie

re:- Ventilation - A.B.A.Ltd - Wittenoom.

I acknowledge the receipt of Inspector Simmon's report and Asst. Inspector Lorton's tabulations in respect to the survey carried out at the Colonial Mine last month.

There is no doubt in my mind that a considerable improvement could be achieved in the matter of airborne dust which the afternoon shift dust counts revealed as being excessive.

Inspector Simmons has recorded the fact that the amount of working places creating airborne dust has increased since his survey of November 1960, and has also mentioned that there was an improvement in the actual circulation of primary ventilation. These two factors have a bearing on the dust concentrations which may not have been readily appreciated.

Because the Colonial Mine is a relatively low resistance mine it has never been difficult to induce large volumes of intake air even though this air has not always been directed through the main working zones. Reference to the most recent temperatures taken in the working places shows that the air is relatively dry when compared with the general trend of underground workings throughout this State. Consequently, there is a tendency to dry the workings as ventilation is improved.

During my inspections whilst the survey was being carried out I had occasion to stop several miners and scrapermen and make them water the immediate locality of their working place in an effort to suppress dust. Many miners protested that they had already watered down, and although it may not have been particularly thorough they were probably quite right.

This will mean that we have to overcome an inherent objection of top A.B.A. officials to the use of water for dust suppression. In the past the poorly ventilated sections of the mine remained quite damp when the backs and broken dirt had been watered down and this caused some concern when the ore reached the mill. Now however, there is no need for excessively wet ore to be handled. With proper liaison between the underground staff and the mill supervisor the use of water for dust suppression could be carried out to our requirements and never cause any concern in the mill. At present, there is either no attempt to water down or it is not done frequently enough to remain effective; or an excessive amount of water comes into contact with the ore through broken pipes or negligence and a complaint is lodged by the mill staff. This in turn is most likely and incorrectly attributed to our instructions to water down.

I realise that my theory concerning the dryness of the mine does not account for the excessive counts on afternoon shift but I am not altogether satisfied that the longer break was the right answer. At the time I agreed to Day shift reverting to an 8 a.m. start I was of the opinion that unless some other form of dust expulsion from the newly fired faces was to be employed the long break lost a lot of its intended benefit.

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On the occasion of that particular inspection I had received several requests to permit the normal shift times to be resumed. It was claimed that unnecessary domestic hardship was involved and that the ventilation had improved to a degree which would maintain satisfactory ventilation standards at all times. I made an inspection soon after the day shift had fired and remained underground for several hours. It was apparent that in many pockets where secondary ventilation had to be used, the dust was still thick until the miners had connected up the ventilating appliances despite the long break.

This meant that heavy concentrations of dust and smoke were blown out into the main circuit as soon as work commenced, even though the entire underground atmosphere had appeared to be quite clear at the commencement of Afternoon Shift. For this reason I informed the management that as soon as they had provided a separate airline into each blind working place to enable the workings to be blown out immediately after firing, I was agreeable to Day Shift commencement reverting to 8 a.m. The matter of a 4.0 p.m. start for Afternoon Shift was to be dependent upon your approval following another survey.

I was told that all miners would be given instructions to turn on the blowing out line as soon as they lit up and that the management would make arrangements for the airline main to be turned off after an appropriate interval. This would also have the effect of giving the recently fired areas an additional blow out just prior to the arrival of the afternoon shift scrapermenbecause the main would be turned on again prior to the commencement of the shift. These blow out lines should be retained irrespective of the interval between shifts.

It is unfortunate that I was occupied with Mr. Lloyd when you visited Wittenoom recently otherwise I could have discussed these points with you after having made a joint examination. When Inspector Simmons was at Wittenoom I formed the opinion that he may have felt a little self conscious regarding his newly acquired status and did not want to put forward any rigid proposals until he had confirmed his ideas with you. I do have the benefit of manometers and other instruments and since his appointment gives him full authority over all metalliferous mines I would prefer him to deal direct with the important matters concerning ventilation.

In future, with my headquarters at Port Hedland, it is unlikely that I will not be available when ventilation surveys are made at Wittenoom and we will be able to come to any decision with complete knowledge of what is involved. The frequency with which inspections are carried out by Inspector Hunt and myself will serve to keep the staff on the job.

If you have given any recent instructions to the manager please inform me of the nature of such instructions. I believe that most of the problems at Wittenoom can be overcome with a better standard of underground supervision and it seems that to achieve this object it will be necessary for me to apply for permission to prosecute the manager for failing to ensure that the regulations concerning the use of ventilating appliances,or the suppression of dust, have not been complied with. The Record Book would reveal the number of entries which refer to 'stricter supervision etc'.

The only other matter concerning the report on the survey is the reference to fibre observed in dust counts. Only two rise samples appear to have been taken. The rises on the 7 level were to go up to a height of 40 feet but of this the actual fibre encountered would barely exceed a total of 5 inches. Nevertheless, if drilling in the fibre zone was in progress this drilling would penetrate the fibre whereas miners in the stopes are instructed not to bore in fibre.

DISTRICT INSPECTOR OF MINES.CDK.

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