



National Union of Mineworkers (Yorkshire Area)

Explosion at Walton Colliery on 22nd April 1959

(Extract, pp. 44 & 45 from a 59 page report)

IN CONCLUSION :

1. Similar to other disasters which have unfortunately occurred and still more regrettably continue to occur in our difficult and dangerous industry, in this Walton Disaster there was a vast amount of evidence from 70 witnesses (although some were not called) and the typescript evidence ran to 1,040 pages.

We cannot bring back those who lost their lives in this disaster, but it is our imperative duty to learn all possible lessons from this disaster and to focus attention upon our safety laws.

Ventilation

2. Preceding pages give information which proves the complete complacency and lack of attention concerning the ventilation laws, which in my opinion led inevitably to this disaster.

The Safety and Health Committee of the National Union of Mineworkers should examine the evidence with a view to making representations to the Minister of Power immediately.

Electricity

3. Since Walton Explosion there has occurred another disaster at St. John's Colliery, a few miles away from Walton, where again the igniting spark came from defective electrical apparatus.

It is imperative that not only should there be recognised Scheme of Maintenance of electrical equipment, and sufficient staff to fully and continuously operate it, but more attention must be paid by everyone concerned in dealing with this potential menace.

I brought out in examination of electrical experts the need for a safer system to prevent, in the event of accidental damage to cables or other electrical apparatus, the resulting spark being of the intensity to ignite gas. I was informed that this had been receiving attention and we should discuss this with the Ministry.

There is also still the need for greater protection to cables at the ripping and at other vulnerable points.

On this matter too the evidence should be examined and representations made to the Minister of Power and the National Coal Board.

Safety Lamps

4. The present Regulations adequately cover the provision of safety lamps in our industry. This disaster emphasizes the need for management and men to fully operate them.

I stress two points :

- (1) The imperative need for a smaller type of lamp with relighter apparatus.
- (2) The necessity for the men who carry out this duty under the Regulations, to be compensated.

Automatic Detectors

In this age when sputniks fly around the Solar System, it should not be beyond the bounds of possibility for an Automatic Detector which in addition to giving a **visual record** of any gas present, but one which gives **audible warnings** too.

Meetings of Representatives

5. I feel that Special Meetings with all sides of the Industry present, together with the Inspectorate of the Safety in Mines Research Establishments, should take place at both National and Area levels to deal with the official Report of Mr. T. A. Rogers **on** the Walton Inquiry and the issues which have arisen, and to indicate steps which have been, are being, or can be taken, to improve the safety of our difficult and dangerous industry.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) J. R. A. MACHEN.

15th November, 1959.