

matter for himself to consider. If I had been in his place I should have done everything I could to verify my opinion.

1379. Mr. Macandrew also asked you: "Looking at the large interests involved, are you of opinion that the request to refer the matter to a Commission was a fair and reasonable one?" Your reply was, I think, "There should have been some way by which no single person should have the power of affecting public interests; there should have been some loophole by which an appeal should be given on either side." Do you still think that some such facility should be available?—Yes; similar to that given by the Act.

1380. Mr. Rolleston asked you: "When you wrote that minute in reply to the manager asking you whether this was a case for inquiry, did you not consider that he conveyed the impression that there was a *prima facie* for inquiry?" To that you replied: "The question should have had consideration to it at once; I anticipated that the Inspector would have considered the question." Are you still of opinion that the manager's letter demanded immediate consideration?—Yes.

1381. Mr. Rolleston further asked you: "Did not the closing of the mine allow the water to accumulate?" You replied: "Certainly; there was no reason to suppose that the water would have come in with such rapidity." Would an inquiry at that date have dealt with the question?—Yes.

1382. The Chairman asked you: "Could any possible harm have occurred to the mine from taking the water out of the mine if the company had gone to the expense of pumping it?" You replied: "No."—I do not think I merely gave that simple negative, because, as I understood the question, it was in consequence of the water being kept out of it. Harm might happen from a dozen other causes.

1383. You would anticipate no harm from keeping the water out?—I do not think that the keeping-out of the water or letting it in is of much importance.

1384. Do you adhere to your former opinion?—I do.

1385. Mr. Macandrew asked you: "Did you approve of allowing the water to accumulate?" You replied: "No, I never approved of it."—I think my reply was, that I deferred consideration of it; I neither expressed approval nor disapproval.

1386. You know Mr. Denniston?—Yes.

1387. Do you consider him a man of experience in these matters?—He is an underground manager.

1388. And an expert?—I have no means of judging. He is a very good coal-viewer; I employed him for the Government to make plans during the surveys of the Greymouth and Oxford coal fields; and he afterwards collected, for the Government, information concerning all the coal mines in the colony.

1389. And he acted in the same capacity as Mr. Binns now does, as Inspector of Mines?—No; not exactly: there was no Act in force at that date; he merely collected information about the mines.

1390. Did he not inspect the workings for the Government?—He merely inspected them to put on record the condition of the mines.

1391. And he did put it on record?—Yes; as to the extent of the workings. He gave no opinion as to whether they were properly conducted.

1392. Do you know if he has had large experience?—I do not know whether he has had a great deal of experience in connection with working mines in this colony.

1393. With regard to Mr. Binns's experience, did you not express an opinion to Mr. Rich that he had neither the age nor experience to justify his decision alone on matters involving such great interests?—I said that at Home he would not be in a position of superior Inspector of Mines. I thought that he was too young to occupy such a position at Home.

1394. And that, in deciding such questions, reference should be made to older or higher authorities?—At Home, I think so. But my reason for stating that was to show Mr. Rich that there was no reason why Mr. Binns should object to any inquiry.

1395. In your second memorandum to the Minister of Mines, respecting Mr. Rich's letter, you say you modified your views when you saw Mr. Twining's correct plan?—Yes.

1396. How do you know it was a more correct plan than the one attached to the manager's letter, which Mr. Rich handed to you?—I assumed that it was more correct, as it gave much more detail; showed that coal had been worked out to a greater extent, and showed more irregularities.

1397. The minute depends on the assumption that it is more correct?—Yes. I should have stated that I was then only hearing one side of the case when I conversed with Mr. Rich on the subject; but I told him that it would be necessary to have the matter more fully explained.

1398. The value of the opinion you expressed then, and of the opinion you express now, as to the safety of the mine is based on the assumption of the correctness of Mr. Binns's opinion and Mr. Twining's plan?—Yes; I have never visited the ground myself.

1399. With regard to the shales: Mr. Loudon, Mr. Denniston, and Mr. Williams, all practical men, of from fifteen to twenty years' experience, have given a most emphatic opinion, based, in at least two instances, on personal observation, that the effect of water on the shales or sandstone is ruinous to the stability of the roof: do you contradict this?—A roof will deteriorate either when there is standing water or when there is no water: it will deteriorate most rapidly when it is soaked and dried again.

1400. If they say that standing water will affect the roof more than in any other case, you dispute it, although they speak as having had the practical management of mines?—If they say that standing water, as a rule, is more injurious to the roof than alternate wetting and drying, I most certainly contradict them.

1401. You have not had the actual management of mines?—No.

1402. With reference to the Commission, in the answers you gave, you assumed that Mr. Binns was acting in his capacity as Inspector under the Act?—Yes.