

MONDAY, 15TH JUNE, 1896.

The Commission met at 10 a.m.

Present: His Honour Judge Ward (Chairman), Sir James Hector, Messrs. Proud and Skellon.

The report was considered and finally agreed to, and signed by all the Commissioners. It was then transmitted to His Excellency the Governor, and the Chairman declared the Commission closed.

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MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

GREYMOUTH, FRIDAY, 8TH MAY, 1896.

NEIL DUNDONALD COCHRANE examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Cochrane?—Inspector of Mines for Nelson, Westland, and Marlborough.

2. What was the last date of your inspection of the Brunner Mine?—18th February; when I inspected the Coolgardie section—"the rise section." I have a tracing of it.

3. Is that the rise opposite the dip-workings?—It is up an outside incline a long distance away from the other workings. I put in this tracing. [Exhibit 2, copy of Mr. Bishop's plan, put in. Witness explained the position of the rise-workings from the plan.] Perhaps I should explain why I only inspected one section last visit. At a former inspection I had found the mine idle—it was said to be for want of trucks. Mr. Bishop told me so. I had no reason to doubt him; but I went and saw Mr. McIntosh, and asked him if it was on account of trucks the mine was idle. He told me that they were really scarce of trucks, and I resolved that I would take one section only, and allow time for my inspection of the other side. If I had taken this section first it might have been thought that time was given to allow the management to put the place in order. And on the 16th January I took the dip-section.

4. *Sir J. Hector.*] That is where the explosion took place on the 26th March?—Yes.

5. From the 16th January to the 26th March you had not been in that part of the mine?—No.

6. Can you give an account of your inspection of the mine—of the dip-workings—on the 16th January?—I went in as far as the "cabin" down the dip-drive, and, as Mr. Bishop was away, I went round the works with Mr. Roberts, interviewer. We went round all the working-places. There were only four fast or solid places working. There were eight men engaged in the four fast places—I am speaking from memory. We had safety-lamps.

7. *The Chairman.*] What were the men working with?—With naked lights. I saw no safety-lamps excepting what Roberts and myself had ourselves. We examined for gas and there was none to be seen.

8. *Sir J. Hector.*] You mean your lamps gave no indication of the presence of gas?—No indication.

9. *Mr. Proud.*] What sort of safety-lamps did you examine with?—Marsaut. I examined carefully to see if there was any indication of a fault as the workings were approaching the fault, but there was no indication.

10. *Sir J. Hector.*] You examined the coal to see that it was not crushed?—To see if there was any indication of a fault. I did not expect to find such there. They were a considerable distance back from the fault. There was no indication of water running in on any face.

11. *Mr. Proud.*] The coal continued of the same character?—Yes.

12. *Mr. Proud.*] Did you measure the air then?—Not on that occasion. I did in my previous inspection in November.

12A. In testing for gas, what kind of a lamp did you use?—The Marsaut.